ENTERTAINMENT / D1

Lea plays lead role in Asian tour of musical

BUSINESS / B1

$1-B Nonoc mines rehabilitation deal collapses

NEWS / A2

Senate, House ratify bicameral report on P1.126-trillion budget

ACROSS / A15

Gov't, MILF agree to end hostilities in North Cotabato town

Women in power less afraid to show soft side

MATINDI
TALAGA
ANG
NANAY!

WASHINGTON—SOME women were struck by the politics of maternity practiced by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton in recent weeks, the imagery and stagecraft that highlighted their roles as

WOMEN/ A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Tuesday, January 30, 2007 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 53 P18 website: www.inquirer.net

GMA calls for 4-party summit on May polls

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

STILL HOUNDED BY THE GHOST OF THE "HELLO Garci" scandal of 2004, President Macapagal-Arroyo wants to wipe the slate clean for the synchronized national and local elections on May 14.

Ms Arroyo yesterday said her administration would ensure clean, honest and orderly polls.

GMA CALLS/ A8

Melo panel tags Palparan in slays

Another militant gunned down in Catbalogan

By Fe Zamora and Joey A. Gabieta, *Inquirer Visayas*

RETIRED SUPREME COURT JUSTICE JOSE MELO yesterday said his commission, citing command responsibility, had recommended that retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan and other commanders be held responsible for the extrajudicial killings in their respective areas during their tours of duty.

In the latest killing, one of two men on a motorcycle yesterday shot and killed Dominador de Luna, 50, a member of the militant Bayan Muna, as the latter watched sacks of rice being unloaded from a truck of the National Food Authority in Catbalogan, Samar, police said.

De Luna, an NFA driver, was the 271st militant killed in political violence during President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, according to an INQUIRER count. Leftist groups have a higher toll, saying politically motivated killings since 2001 have claimed over 700 lives, including victims of armed clashes.

Melo said holding military commanders responsible for extrajudicial killings was one of the recommendations in the final report of the fact-finding commission formed in August 2006 by Ms Arroyo to look into the political violence following a local and international outcry.

The 89-page report of the commission headed by Melo was submitted to Ms Arroyo last week. Melo declined to release the report, saying the President had the prerogative to make it public.

The 74-year-old Melo said the investigation of the four-member panel showed that "majority of the victims were leftist-activist-militants" and that the suspected assailants belonged to the military.

"But we don't want to tag the whole military establishment, only elements of the military who were allowed to do their thing without supervision from higher officers," Melo said in a telephone interview.

"Some of the killings were attributed to politicians, some to the security guards of landlords, but (the) majority of the killings pointed to these military elements [as the culprits]," he said.

MELO PANEL/ A8

PALPARAN testifies before the Melo Commission in this photo taken last year. INQUIRER PHOTO

'Killings not part of our operations'

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—RETired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan Jr. yesterday said he could not be held responsible for the extrajudicial killings during his tour of duty in Central Luzon because "none of those was perpetrated by soldiers under my command."

Palparan, who headed the Army's 7th Infantry Division from September 2005 until his retirement on Sept. 11 last year, was reacting to the Melo Commission's recommendation that military commanders be held accountable for the killings.

He said that as far as he knew, the cases lodged against him or the commanders under him did "not pinpoint any specific soldier."

"Perhaps the Melo Commission should define what command re-

KILLINGS/ A8

ACCOMPANIED by jail guards, Charlie "Atong" Ang leaves the Sandiganbayan after the antigraft court raised questions on his plea bargain. Ang, an erstwhile gambling crony of Joseph Estrada, offered to plead guilty to a lesser offense that he had conspired with the former President to divert P130 million in tobacco excise taxes. RAFFY LERMA

WRONG CRIME?

Atong's guilty plea questioned

By Norman Bordadora

CHARLIE "ATONG" ANG'S REquest for a short jail term in exchange for his confession of his role in the alleged diversion of P130 million in tobacco excise taxes to President Joseph Estrada in 1998 encountered rough sailing at yesterday's pre-trial proceedings.

Justices of the Sandiganbayan special division questioned the crime Ang pleaded guilty to—corruption of a public official, which is punishable by two to six years in prison—because the case information never had Ang offering, much less, giving Estrada the bribe.

"There is nothing in your evidence that (Ang) bribed Erap. He merely provided the receptacle for which the tobacco excise taxes were diverted," Associate Justice Francisco Villaruz said as Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio and Ang's defense lawyer Alfredo Villamor argued the merits of the plea bargain agreement.

ATONG'S/ A7

Loren, Chiz spurn Palace offer of slots in Team Unity

By Michael Lim Ubac, Nancy Carvajal and Cynthia D. Balana

DESPITE ALL THE TALK OF switching loyalties, two of the opposition's big guns yesterday spurned Malacañang-backed attempts to lure them into joining the administration's "Team Unity" senatorial slate.

"I am gratified by the offers of the various political parties, but in case I decided to run, I would be politically independent but with the opposition," former Sen. Loren Legarda told THE INQUIRER. "I wouldn't be dictated [to] by anyone."

"Chiz is surely running (with the) opposition," Rizal Rep. Michael Duavit said of party mate Sorsogon Rep. Francis Escudero.

Duavit is secretary general of the Nationalist People's Coalition, a party split into two camps, one of which supports President Macapagal-Arroyo and the other which is aligned with other opposition groups.

Both Legarda, who has consistently topped surveys of possible senatorial candidates, and Escudero have been the targets of Malacañang's catch-all efforts to set up a senatorial lineup for the May 14 midterm elections that would include some of the chief critics of the President.

A member of Escudero's staff also confirmed to the INQUIRER that the lawmaker was staying with the opposition.

Malacañang sources also appeared to squelch speculation that the Team Unity ticket would include Escudero.

One Palace official, who had

LOREN/ A8

Filipino maid in HK theft posts bail

By Philip C. Tubeza and Daisy C.L. Mandap

HONG KONG—"*SA WAKAS, NAKAKITA rin ng liwanag.* (At last, I was able to see some light)."

This was what Preslyn Saga-Catacutan yesterday said as she walked out of the Hong Kong High Court detention center nearly two months after she was sentenced to six months in prison for stealing photographs from famous Hong Kong Canto-pop singer Jacky Cheung.

The 30-year-old domestic helper was released after High Court Deputy Judge Peter Longley allowed her to post a HK$5,000

FILIPINO/ A6

61st Anniversary
Onward to Victory
Partido Liberal
61 Years

LIBERALS ALL
Joining hands at the Liberal Party's celebration of its 61st anniversary are (from left) Rep. Rodolfo Bacani Jr., former Education Secretary Florencio Abad, Sen. Francis Pangilinan, Sen. Franklin Drilon, Rep. Benigno Aquino III, Sen. Manuel Roxas II and Sen. Rodolfo Biazon. The event was held at the Club Filipino in Greenhills, San Juan. JOAN BONDOC

Encounters with Kerry, Gates in Davos

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND—CALL THEM "Davos moments."

These are the personal life-changing events that can only happen during the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), usually held at the start of the year in this Alpine resort town high in the Swiss Alps.

For President Macapagal-Arroyo, one moment came during the Jan. 25 dinner when she came face to face with author Michael Porter.

Porter wrote "The Competitiveness of Nations" and he was among the big

ENCOUNTERS/ A6

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Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms while Eastern Luzon will have cloudy skies with light rains. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/29/07 SOURCE PAGASA

Senate, House ratify bicam report on P1.126-T budget

By TJ Burgonio and Michael Ubac

THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPresentatives yesterday ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the P1.126-trillion 2007 national budget after a nearly month-long deadlock on a contentious school-feeding program.

The senators voted unanimously, by acclamation, to approve the report at the start of their second week of sessions, a little more than a week before Congress adjourns on Feb. 9 for the May 14 election campaign period.

If President Macapagal-Arroyo signs the budget measure into law, this would break the government's practice of reenacting the previous year's budget the past two years.

The government has been operating on a P907.56-billion budget since 2005 after the two chambers of Congress failed to pass a budget in 2006.

Sen. Franklin Drilon, finance committee chair, said the budget would drastically cut the perennial shortages in classrooms and teachers in the public schools.

It also provided a P10-billion fund for the reconstruction of areas devastated by the series of typhoons last year, and an additional P2 billion for the repair of schools in the Bicol region damaged by the storms.

"We are certain this budget will not only facilitate government operations this year, but more importantly we are proud that we had labored with this important piece of legislative work that would hopefully make a difference in the lives of 85 million Filipinos," Drilon said in a speech.

The measure also granted Malacañang the authority to use unprogrammed funds to give long-overdue salary increases to government employees.

Sen. Joker Arroyo moved that P8.3 billion of the P10.3 billion in unprogrammed funds be released to cover the 10-percent increase in the pay of government employees, including uniformed personnel and teachers.

"The moment the amount is set aside, the salary increase can take effect in July," he said in a briefing.

Arroyo said he doubted the President would veto the measure, saying "I don't think it's in the interest of the President to veto it."

Drilon and his House counterpart, Rep. Joey Salceda, broke the deadlock on the P4.7-billion Food for School Program of the Department of Education two weeks ago by agreeing to halve the allocation to the department's school-feeding and school-building programs.

Under the agreement, P2.613 billion would be allotted to fund the construction of 5,400 classrooms on top of 12,226 new classrooms, while P2 billion would be allocated to finance the distribution of food supplements such as milk, pan de sal and vegetable-based noodles.

"This will address the malnutrition problem among our schoolchildren which is the original intent of the DepEd's nutrition program," Drilon said.

An additional P873 million was allotted for the hiring of more teachers who specialize in Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and General Science.

Poll body to abide by automation law but...

By Jerome Aning and Michael Lim Ubac

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (Comelec) yesterday said it would abide by the newly passed election automation law but warned it may not be able to implement it in time for the May 14 polls.

In a press conference, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. and Commissioners Resurreccion Borra, Romeo Brawner and Nicodemo Ferrer refused to categorically state if implementation of the newly signed Automated Elections System Act, or Republic Act No. 9369, was still possible.

Borra, the Comelec official in charge of modernization, noted that RA 9369 would take effect on Feb. 12, with the bidding process for the automated machines as mandated by the new procurement law, or RA 9184, requiring at least three months.

"We will follow the law because Sen. Richard Gordon is threatening to impeach us, but at this point in time he cannot file any impeachment case yet because the law is not yet effective," Borra said.

But top officials of the Comelec can't be impeached for failing to partially automate the May polls, a House member said yesterday.

"They can't be impeached because they can't be held to account for an impossible crime," said Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin, chair of the House committee on suffrage and electoral reforms.

At a press conference, Locsin, principal author of RA 9369, agreed with Abalos, saying it would be "impossible to implement" due to time constraints.

He noted that the law it amended, Republic Act No. 8436, which had called on the Comelec to use an automated election system starting May 11, 1998, had not been implemented either.

"It has never been implemented and nobody has impeached them ... and (Sen. Aquilino) "Nene" Pimentel and I will defend the Comelec. Right now what the Comelec is doing by holding back is exactly what the opposition wants because (opposition lawmakers) say it's too late," Locsin said.

He blamed the Senate for the delay in the approval of the measure which was signed into law only on Jan. 23 by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Locsin said he favored the enactment of the new law because "it is enough that it's in the statute books," and that definitely full automation would happen in 2010. *With Christine O. Avendaño*

VIZCONDE MASSACRE

Webbs to raise case to SC

By Tarra Quismundo, Leila B. Salaverria and Margaux C. Ortiz

THE LAWYER FOR HUBERT Webb yesterday said they would pursue the fight for an acquittal by elevating the case to the Supreme Court.

The Court of Appeals (CA) denied the reconsideration plea of Webb and five others, Hospicio "Pyke" Fernandez, Michael Gatchalian, Miguel Rodriguez, Antonio "Tony Boy" Lejano and Peter Estrada to overturn their convictions in the Vizconde massacre.

The Parañaque Regional Trial Court had meted them up to 40 years behind bars (reclusion perpetua) for the rape-slay of Carmelita Vizconde and the killing of her mother, Estrellita, and younger sister, Jennifer inside their Parañaque house on June 30, 1991.

"The next step is to go to the Supreme Court and file a petition for certiorari to have the case reviewed again," said Vitaliano Aguirre II, Webb's lawyer since the onset of the case in 1995.

"We will go for a complete reversal and raise questions of fact and of law that we think the Supreme Court could entertain," Aguirre told the INQUIRER yesterday in a phone interview.

The new appeal would again ask for a review of all evidence presented for the convict's defense, including video placing him in California and Tijuana, Mexico shortly after the massacre.

The Webb family's stay in the United States before, during and immediately after the Vizconde massacre has been central to the defense's bid for an acquittal.

Aguirre said his client and the five others convicted of the killings would "stay in jail until the court has favorably resolved" the petition.

HUBERT Webb chats with a relative in this photo taken at the Parañaque City jail on Jan. 5, 1999. PDI FILE PHOTO

The lawyer, who has yet to receive an official copy of the appellate court's decision, would have 15 days upon receipt of the ruling to elevate the appeal to the high tribunal.

Happy father

Meanwhile, anti-crime crusader, Lauro Vizconde, who still suffers from the loss of his wife and two daughters, expressed happiness after the CA junked the motion for consideration filed by Webb and his co-accused.

"I am happy because I believe that in the end, justice will prevail," Vizconde told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

He said, however, that he would consult the Office of the Solicitor General regarding the possible inhibition of Supreme Court Justice Antonio Carpio from participating in the case deliberation at the high tribunal.

"He (Carpio) had 'witnessed' for Webb during the duration of the trial," Vizconde said.

Carpio said he had spoken with Webb's father, former Rep. Freddie Webb, who was then in the United States and mentioned that his wife, Elizabeth, and Hubert were with him.

The date, Carpio said, was June 29, 1991, one day before the Vizconde killings.

Disappointed mother

Webb's mother, Elizabeth, yesterday expressed her dismay over the appellate court's affirmation of her son's conviction for the Vizconde massacre in 1991.

"Of course, we are very disappointed," Elizabeth told the INQUIRER by phone yesterday. "Right now, I'm just in the house... my husband (Freddie) left. He's dealing with his pain and I am dealing with mine. We're both very weak right now. It's better for us not to break down at the same time so we're giving each other space ... [We] have to gather strength. We can't go there (jail) and be a liability for [Hubert]."

They usually spend Sundays at the National Bilibid Penitentiary's maximum security compound with their son, bringing him lunch and merienda.

She said they would explore "all possible venues" to exonerate Webb from the gruesome crime. They learned that their appeal had been denied from a newspaper which headlined the story.

"It's very hard for me [to accept the CA decision] because we had showed that he was in the United States [at the time of the massacre). It seems they were not able to dissect the case well," Elizabeth said.

She added that Jessica Alfaro, the controversial witness who implicated her son and the five other convicts in the multiple slay, was "a fabricated witness."

Denied

Aside from denying the reconsideration plea of Webb and five others, the CA assailed their contention that public clamor influenced its decision to uphold the guilty verdicts.

In its 18-page resolution, the CA said its decision was supported by sufficient justifications based on the credibility of witnesses, appreciation of evidence, conspiracy, denial and alibi, which it added, are well-entrenched in the court's jurisdictions.

"In conclusion, this Court stresses that the now assailed decision of Dec. 15, 2005 was arrived at after a careful consideration of the defenses of the accused-appellants and a painstaking examination of the records of the case," it said. "It is thus quite reprehensible for parties to even insinuate that the outcome of the instant appeal was swayed by public opinion or considerations other than merit."

The CA maintained its decision agreeing with the regional trial court that Webb, Lejano, Gatchalian, Fernandez, Rodriguez and Estrada were guilty as principals, and Gerardo Biong was guilty as accessory, of rape with homicide.

The principal suspects' reclusion perpetua sentence was also upheld, while Biong's sentence was modified to six to 12 years imprisonment.

5 Nobel Peace laureates join campaign vs leprosy

By Christian V. Esguerra

FIVE NOBEL PEACE LAUREATES, leprosy sufferers and world health officials yesterday launched a second global appeal in Manila to end discrimination of those afflicted with the disease.

The "Global Appeal to End Stigma and Discrimination against People Affected by Leprosy" has asked the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to pass a resolution calling on each national government to issue guidelines to eliminate discrimination against leprosy sufferers.

"We call on people all over the world to change their perception and foster an environment in which leprosy incidents, cured persons and their families can lead normal lives free from stigma and discrimination," said the manifestation, whose signatories include Cape Town Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu who received the Nobel Prize in 1984.

Tutu, who chaired the 1994 Truth and Reconciliation Commission that investigated human rights violations related to racial discrimination in Africa, was joined in the appeal by fellow peace laureates Oscar Arias, former Costa Rica president, Jimmy Carter; former United States president, Elie Wiesel; and the Dalai Lama.

The manifestation was also signed by Presidents Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, ex-Presidents Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic, Mary Robinson of Ireland and R. Venkataraman of India, Jordanian Prince El Hassan bin Talal, and Yohei Sasakawa of the Nippon Foundation.

The world leaders were trying to dismantle myths about leprosy—that it was highly contagious, incurable, hereditary, or worst—a form of "divine punishment."

The World Health Organization has said about 100 million people with leprosy worldwide, as well as their families, continue to face ostracism and social stigmatization.

"We want the whole world to know that leprosy is a curable disease, that medicine is free all over the world. Therefore, there should be no discrimination," Yohei Sasakawa, WHO goodwill ambassador for elimination of leprosy, said in launching the "Global Appeal 2007."

"Contrary to popular belief, leprosy is extremely difficult to contract," Sasakawa said. "With prompt diagnosis and treatment, it can be medically cured within 6 to 12 months without risk of deformity."

Leprosy ceased to be a public health problem after a cure was made available in the 1980s. Since 1985, multidrug therapy has treated more than 15 million leprosy sufferers, and prevented disability in four million people, WHO said. *With a report from AP*

SWS head slams Comelec ban on publication of survey results

By Kate Pedroso
Inquirer Research

"AN ACT OF SHEER INCOMPETENCE."

This was how Social Weather Stations president Mahar Mangahas described the Commission on Elections' issuance of Resolution No. 7767, which contains a provision banning the publication of surveys "affecting" national and local candidates within a specified period before election day.

The resolution, which contains the rules and regulations for the conduct of the May 2007 elections, was promulgated by the Comelec en banc on Nov. 30, 2006. Section 32 reads: "Surveys affecting national candidates shall not be published fifteen (15) days before the day of the election and surveys affecting local candidates shall not be published seven (7) days before the day of the election."

Mangahas pointed out the same provision could be found in Republic Act No. 9006, the Fair Election Act, which was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on May 5, 2001.

RA 9006 devotes an entire section to election surveys, including Section 5.4, which contains the provision in question.

In May 2001, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of SWS and the Manila Standard newspaper, saying "[Section] 5.4 of RA 9006 constitutes an unconstitutional abridgment of freedom of speech, expression and the press."

SWS and Manila Standard had argued that "the restriction on the publication of election survey results constitutes prior restraint on the exercise of freedom of speech."

For its part, the Comelec justified the restrictions as "necessary to prevent the manipulation and corruption of the electoral process by unscrupulous and erroneous surveys just before the election."

But SWS countered that when pollsters conducted and published the results of surveys "up to as close as two days before election day" during the 1992, 1995 and 1998 polls, it did not cause "confusion among the voters."

It also maintained that "there is neither empirical nor historical evidence to support the conclusion that there is an immediate and inevitable danger to the voting process posed by election surveys," and that "there is no reason for ordinary voters to be denied access to the results of election surveys, which are relatively objective."

The Comelec contended "the impairment of freedom of expression is minimal, the restriction being limited both in duration, i.e., the last 15 days before the national election and the last 7 days before a local election, and in scope as it does not prohibit election survey results but only requires timeliness."

The Supreme Court ruled that "[Section] 5.4 is invalid because (1) it imposes a prior restraint on the freedom of expression, (2) it is a direct and total suppression of a category of expression even though such suppression is only for a limited period, and (3) the governmental interest sought to be promoted can be achieved by means other than the suppression of freedom of expression."

According to Mangahas, Comelec spokesperson Jaime Jimenez had admitted the commission "had made a mistake" with the resolution in an interview on the ANC television news channel last week. Mangahas said Jimenez claimed "it was not intentional" and that it would be "corrected soon."

"As of now, I have not seen any correction from Comelec, even though Mr. Jimenez claimed to me, by telephone on January 25, that the correction was 'awaiting Comelec signature,'" Mangahas said in a statement.

A check of the Comelec Education and Information Division (http://comelec.wordpress.com) website showed its copy of the resolution had not yet been modified and still carried the provision.

A SALENG
TA UMILI
HONG KONG

HONG KONG PROTEST
Party-list Rep. Liza Maza of Gabriela addresses a rally attended by thousands of Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong Sunday to protest the implementation of the new POEA guidelines. Dolores Balladares, chairperson of the United Filipinos in Hong Kong, said the rally was just the first of a series of protests that they are planning to force the Philippine government to scrap the new guidelines.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

TODAY SINGAPORE, TOMORROW THE WORLD

Gov't allots P877 per voter to let OFWs vote via internet

By Volt Contreras

THE GOVERNMENT IS ALLOTTING P877 per voter under a pilot project that would enable migrant Filipinos in at least one country to cast their ballot via the Internet, a Commission on Elections official said yesterday.

"That's cheap for modern technology," said Commissioner Florentino Tuason Jr., who said the body now has an "80-percent" chance of implementing the scheme for testing in Singapore.

The affluent city state is home to some 26,800 registered Filipino voters, he said. At P877 per voter, the Comelec is therefore allocating P23.5 million to put them ahead of the rest of the Filipino electorate in terms of high-tech polling.

On the average, manual elections held within the country would cost the Comelec around P500 per voter, he said.

In the first ever overseas absentee voting held in May 2004, the cost went up to P1,400 per overseas voter to cover newly bought equipment, personnel training, information campaigns, etc., Tuason added.

The official gave these figures to the media at yesterday's agreement signing between the Comelec and the Department of Foreign Affairs on the conduct of overseas polling for over half-a-million migrants.

DFA Undersecretary Rafael Seguis said that from around 364,000 registered overseas voters in 2004, the figure has since grown by a third. About 504,800 voters are expected to troop to 87 polling posts in over 50 countries for the May 2007 elections.

Tuason said Comelec chose Singapore to pilot "e-voting" because 60 to 70 percent of its population would have access to cyberspace, among the highest Internet usage rates in the world.

He said the Comelec was set to test the scheme pending a check on whether there would be "legal obstacles" to its implementation in view of the poll modernization law—or the Automated Elections System Act—signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo last Jan. 23.

Through "e-voting," a voter will be assigned a kind of personal identification number (PIN) to cast his vote by accessing the Comelec web site "from his home or from any Internet kiosk," Tuason explained.

This procedure would still apply to a Filipino voter registered in Singapore but who might be in the Philippines during the 30-day balloting period for overseas voters, Seguis added.

5 new witnesses vs rebel soldiers

By Alcuin Papa

AT LEAST FIVE NEW WITNESSES BElonging to the military have submitted statements to police bolstering the rebellion case against some 50 civilians and soldiers linked to the botched attempt to overthrow the Arroyo administration in February last year.

A senior police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity for lack of authorization, told the INQUIRER the testimonies of the new witnesses would strengthen the case against the accused rebellious group.

"We believe their testimonies would corroborate our evidence against those accused," the officer said.

The source said the witnesses, who were mostly from the Marine Corps, did not directly participate in the February coup attempt but had "vital information" that would strengthen the case.

The officer also said a "big name" personality was set to be identified by the witnesses. The personality was said to have been part of the group that financed the coup try.

Police have filed rebellion charges against soldiers belonging to the Magdalo group whose members were arrested in a rented house in Fairview, Quezon City, last year.

Some of those arrested allegedly implicated former Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, lawyer Christopher Belmonte and former Ambassador Roy Señeres in the plot to oust Ms Arroyo. Only Honasan is in police custody.

A few days after the failed coup, an uprising occurred at Philippine Marine headquarters at Fort Bonifacio but this was a result of the relief of Marine commandant Maj. Gen. Renato Miranda. Many people, however, thought it was an attempt to continue the coup try.

Some military officers are undergoing a general court-martial for their alleged participation in the failed February coup attempt. They include Miranda, former Scout Rangers chief Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and Marine Col. Ariel Querubin.

"MY PASSPORT HAS TOO MANY EMPTY PAGES. MALAYSIA, HERE I COME."

	from (USD)
MANILA - KOTA KINABALU	79
MANILA - KUALA LUMPUR	119
CEBU - KOTA KINABALU	79
CEBU - KUALA LUMPUR	59

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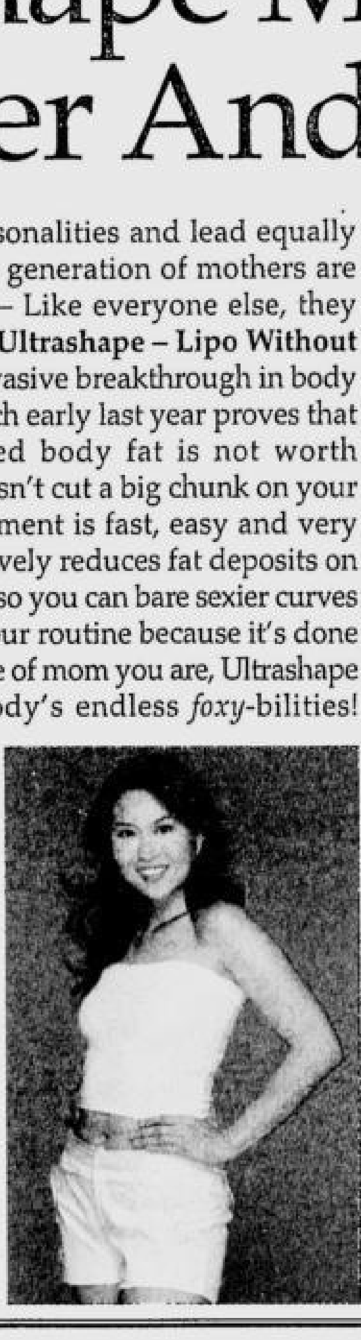
Lyn Ching – Pascual, 34
Smart and sassy mom



Always on the go, Lyn makes sure that she never runs out of quality time for her daughter and husband Jappy. Lyn wants to do things fast under a pretty much organized schedule. In fact, her fast-paced lifestyle is the same reason that brought her closer to Marie France's Ultrashape. She says, "With Ultrashape, all I have to do is walk in, lie down for about an hour while undergoing my treatment and drive my way back to work again. I can even take phone calls or read some magazines even while I'm at it. The best part was, I could feel my tummy flatten only after a few weeks! A friend of mine who also tried Ultrashape immediately lost 2 inches in just one month! Ultrashape is not just fast and easy, it delivers excellent results as well!"

Cristina Gonzalez – Romualdez, 42
Posh and classic mom

Despite the busy nature of her catering business, Cristina prefers spending most of her quality time in Tacloban where time moves slowly. It is where she best personifies calm and domesticity while still donning a classy, graceful image.

She states, "I love my life in the province. Strolling along the beach, wearing simple dresses and enjoying the serenity of the place with my family. It strips me off the frills and stresses from work and city life. If I overindulge in good food because of the relaxing environment, all I have to do is to have my tummy flattened by Ultrashape. Just like my preference for comfort, Ultrashape requires no drastic surgeries and harmful side-effects. It doesn't require complicated diets and it leaves no ugly scars. It's a very convenient, simple and risk-free method to re-sculpt the body by melting away loose tummy fat that makes one look and feel older and less attractive."

Dawn Zulueta–Lagdameo, 37
Glam and modern mom

Dawn is no doubt devoted and hands-on with her son Jacobo. But during her spare time, she indulges on her penchant for stylish shoes, fashionable clothes, costume parties and her ipod music collection. Her chic and cosmopolitan taste with just about everything makes her an exciting, contemporary mom. For Dawn, it's always an advantage to be up-to-date.

"Even with my slimming option, I go for the one that's modern and gives so many benefits at the same time – like Ultrashape! With its ultrasound technology, Ultrashape breaks down stubborn fats that are left inside my body even after I've lost weight. What's good is, it metabolizes all the unwanted body fat so it can be converted to useful energy! For me, that's what makes liposuction unnecessary. Ultrashape is safer, equally hi-tech yet just as effective. Its non-invasive approach in body contouring makes it a better alternative to liposuction!," Dawn explains.

This year, give yourself a slimmer, sexier body. Forget about liposuction, excruciating diets and tiring workouts! If you are still left troubled with some stubborn fats that just won't go away even after going through your crash diets, rigid workouts or even a surgical procedure, schedule yourself for an Ultrashape treatment right away! It promises an average reduction of about 2cm in just one treatment – without the risks and side-effects, surgical scars and downtime! Call Marie France now at 894-BODY (2639).

KATAPAT

Kilusan Tungo sa Pambansang Tangkilikan

SO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE MAY KNOW:

A QUESTION OF FAIRNESS AND DECENCY

THE FACTS: The Arroyo government is pushing the indirect but controversial sale of a big block of PLDT shares to a group of foreign investors composed of the Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd. and NTT DoCoMo of Japan . The block of PLDT shares has a current market value of almost P30 billion, but the government, through the Committee on Privatization (COP), is selling it at 20 percent discount, or P25.6 billion. The government says the sale seeks to raise funds to reduce the budget deficit. To be concluded by the end of January, the sale raises several issues:

FOREIGN OWNERSHIP

The sale is a blatant and wanton violation of the 1987 Constitution that limits foreign ownership to 40 percent of the equity of a telecommunications entity. PLDT has admitted that foreign firms already own 61.2 percent of its common shareholdings. Since, the block of PLDT comprise 6.3 percent of PLDT equity, the foreign ownership will rise to 67.5 percent. This is compounded by the foreign investors' heavy borrowings from local banks, depriving legitimate Filipino entrepreneurs of capital to shore up their businesses.

RIGHTFUL VALUATION

The P25.6 billion price tag is a bargain for the foreign investors, one of which has a dubious reputation and track record of handling "tainted" Indonesian money. It is a sweetheart deal or a fire sale.

How the national government has reached this low price is a big question. PLDT is now the nation's most profitable firm with an estimated net profit of about P35 billion in 2006. Also, PLDT share prices have been rising - and will continue to rise over the years. Instead of selling the PLDT shares at a premium of between 20 to 50 percent over its current market price (which is normal for block sales), the government is pushing the sale at a discount, where it stands to lose between P8 to P17 billion in revenues.

TRANSPARENCY

Undue haste and lack of transparency have characterized the asset disposal. It took two weeks to complete the public bidding, which few people knew and where legitimate business entities, especially those Filipinos-owned, had almost no chance to participate. No credible and independent financial advisor was hired. The bidding took place when typhoon "Reming" was killing hundreds of Bicolanos and public debates were raging over the issue of amending the Constitution through a constituent assembly. The privatization of big ticket assets usually takes several months to complete with stringent bidding rules to follow. The transaction is more of a negotiated sale under the guise of a public bidding.

MISREPRESENTATION

The national government and the PLDT propaganda machinery have been saying that what is being sold is a big block of Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corporation (PTIC) shares and not PLDT's. As such, the price is low because PTIC is not a listed firm, unlike PLDT. This is a lie. PTIC is the holding firm that possesses the controlling interest in PLDT. What are being sold are PLDT shares, not PTIC shares, which are worthless without the PLDT shares.

MOTIVES

The hasty sale of a big block of government asset at a very cheap price to foreign investors raises many questions about the motives of its movers. To augment the budget deficit is unbelievable. Is this a way for the Arroyo administration to raise campaign funds for its candidates in the coming midterm polls? Has graft money changed hands? Who are the powerful people behind this deal?

THE KILUSANG MAKABANSANG EKONOMIYA (KME) opposes the impending sale, which will be a clear violation of the Constitution and the basic tenets of fairness, decency and transparency.

We urge the people, who are involved in and endorsing this sale, to back out because they will certainly face the people's wrath for their irresponsible and treasonous acts.

We urge the President to cancel the sale and initiate a re-bidding with more transparent rules. If this is not possible, we urge the President to keep those PLDT shares in the name of the national government primarily to boost its presence in a critical sector, which is telecommunications.

We urge Congress to proceed with its probe "in aid of legislation" of the circumstances surrounding the anomalous deal and come out with a clear and unequivocal legislation that would prevent sweetheart deals or fire sale of government assets.

We urge certain members of Congress to refrain from supporting and pushing what is patently illegal and anomalous sale and to adhere without fear or favor to the time-honored principles of public service.

We urge other responsible sectors of Philippine society to join hands with us in our quest of economic nationalism, where the interest of Filipino entrepreneurs is given focus and importance. It is about time to unite.

SIGNED:

Most Rev. Julio Labayen,OCD
Emeritus of Infanta

Most Rev. Antonio Tobias, DD
Diocese of Novaliches

Most Rev. Deogracias Iniguez, DD
Diocese of Caloocan

Jaime R. Regalario
Chairman- Kilusang Makabansang Ekonomiya(KME)

Jose A. Albert
Chairman – Kilusang Tungo sa Pambansang Tanglikikan
(KATAPAT)

Fr. Rudy Abao, MSC
Parish Priest, Sta Quiteria Parish
Former Chair, A.M.R.S.P
Former Pres. Communication Foundation of Asia

Fr.Bernardine Leones,OFM
Chairman, Franciscan Movement Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation
(FMJPIC)

Sr. Estela Cordero, FDCC
Canossian Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor

Dr. Ernesto Gonzales
Director, UST Social Research Center

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Sisters in charge
Alay Kapwa

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Sr. Willybrorda Laccay, SFIC
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, SFIC Marikina

Sr. Dolor Salamisan, AMP
Augustinian Missionaries of the Philippines

Sr. Tess Cordova, RGS
Religious of the Good Shepherd Social Action, Ilagan Isabela

Sr.Ma.Pilar Unggay,SCMM
Sisters of Charity our Lady Mother of Mercy

Dean Jorge V. Sibal
UP School of Labor & Industrial Relation (SOLAIR)

Atty. Federico Ples
Philippine Association of Supermarkets, Inc (PASI)

Bormeo G. Modanza
Filipino Inventors Society
(FIS)

Edmundo Aguila
National Economic Protectionism Assn. (NEPA)

Alfredo Bentulan, Sr.
President, Asia Pacific Entrepreneurs Assn, Inc.
(ASPEN) Small & Medium Scale

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Mabini Justice League

Sr. Fely Solatorio
Missionary Sisters of Mercy

Sr. Alleo Fojas
BEC, St. Francis of Assisi

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Maximina Moron
Sec- General, Alay Kapwa

Victoria Segui Calizo
Kahublagan sa Pagbago
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ADVT

AFP tells soldiers: DND post GMA's call

THE ARMED FORCES of the Philippines told its soldiers to accept whomever President Macapagal-Arroyo would name as the next defense secretary, following a controversy over her purported choice of Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

Ms Arroyo is expected to make her announcement by the end of the month. She said she would serve as acting defense chief for only two months starting Nov. 30, 2006.

"It is the prerogative of the President. The Armed Forces will accept and follow whomever the President appoints," military spokesperson Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacarro said yesterday.

He said as far as the AFP leadership was concerned, rumors about Ebdane's impending appointment have been received without negative reaction from soldiers.

Ebdane was widely reported as the top choice for the defense post when Ms Arroyo's former chief legal counsel and trusted aide, Avelino Cruz Jr. resigned on Nov. 30 after he publicly disagreed with Malacañang's drive to overhaul the Constitution. *Dona Pazzibugan*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, January 30, 2007
4th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Heb 12:1-4
Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

Jesus crossed to the other side of the lake and while he was still on the shore, a large crowd gathered around him. Jairus, an official of the synagogue, came up and seeing Jesus, threw himself at his feet and asked him earnestly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may get well and live."

Jesus went with him and many people followed, pressing from every side. Among the crowd was a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a lot at the hands of many doctors and had spent everything she had, but instead of getting better, she was worse. Since she had heard about Jesus, this woman came up behind him and touched his cloak thinking, "If I just touch his clothing, I shall get well." Her flow of blood dried up at once, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her complaint.

But Jesus was conscious that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" His disciples answered, "You see how the people are crowding around you. Why do you ask who touched you?" But he kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, aware of what had happened, came forward trembling and afraid. She knelt before him and told him the whole truth.

Then Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace and be free of this illness."

While Jesus was still speaking, some people arrived from the official's house to inform him, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Master any further?" But Jesus ignored what they said and told the official, "Do not fear, just believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James.

When they arrived at the house, Jesus saw a great commotion with people weeping and wailing loudly. Jesus entered and said to them, "Why all this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

They laughed at him. But Jesus sent them outside and went with the child's father and mother and his companions into the room where the child lay. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, "Talitha kumi!" which means: "Little girl, get up!"

The girl got up at once and began to walk around. (She was 12 years old.) The parents were astonished, greatly astonished. Jesus strictly ordered them not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Commentary

We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses—remember them, name them, rely on them. Jesus endured the cross and they followed him—we come after with them and we are not allowed to be discouraged or abandon the struggle. We are very young in learning to resist evil. Jesus heals everyone, first a woman who for 12 years sought help. In faith, she reaches out to touch his cloak, and is immediately healed by the power that goes forth from Jesus—even just his garments. She tells her story and goes to live in faith. Jesus brings the daughter of Jairus back to life. At age 12 (when one becomes an adult in Jewish society) she died but was alive again through the power of the Word of Jesus. Jesus' words are for us today: "Fear is useless. What is needed is trust." We must trust in the face of sickness, long illness, death, fear, insecurity, all our terrors—trust is what we need.

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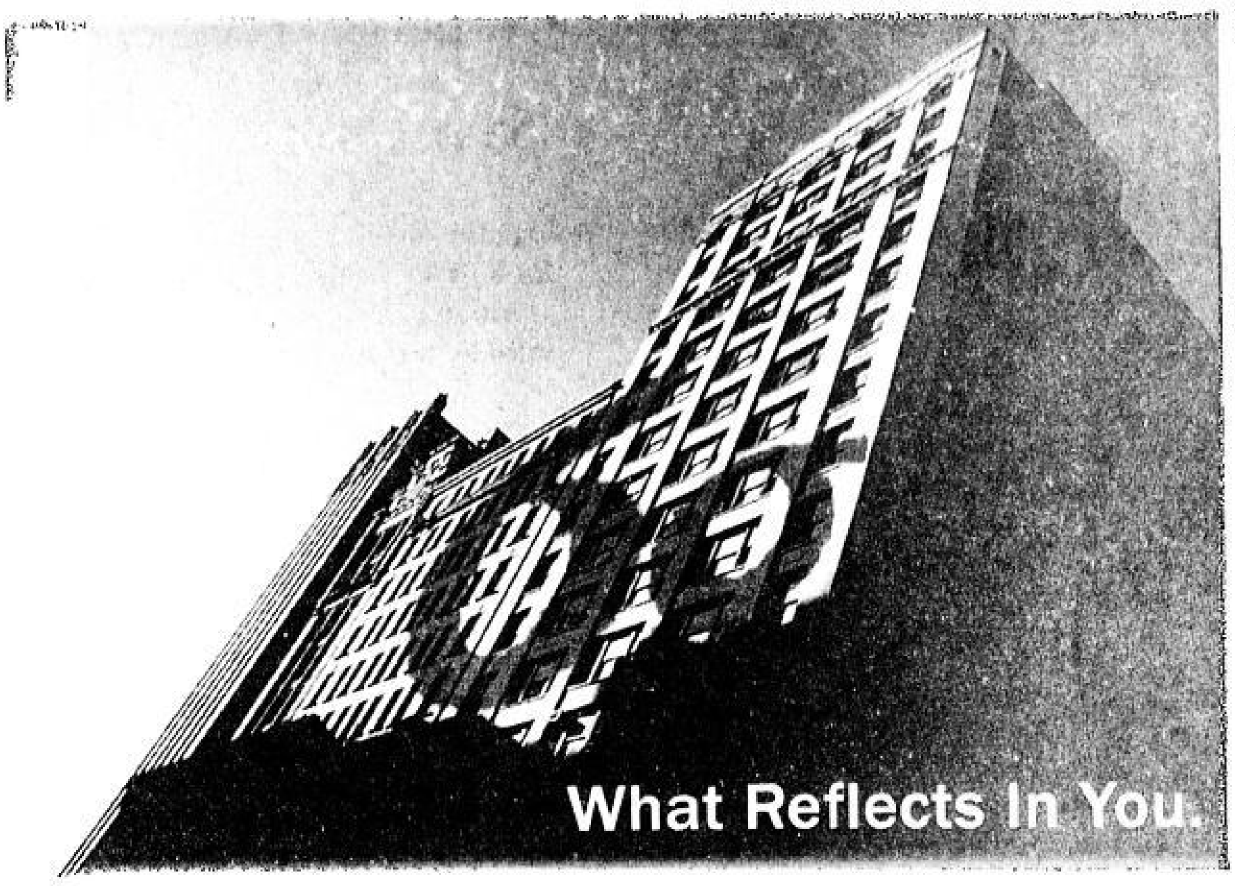

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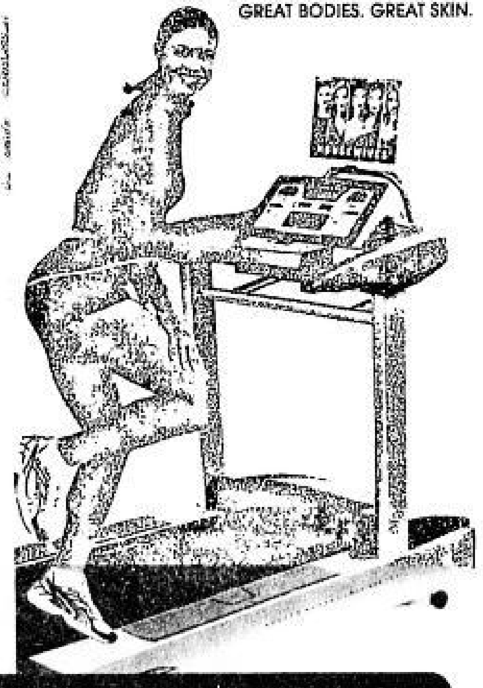

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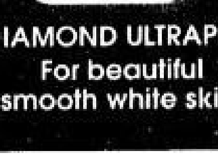

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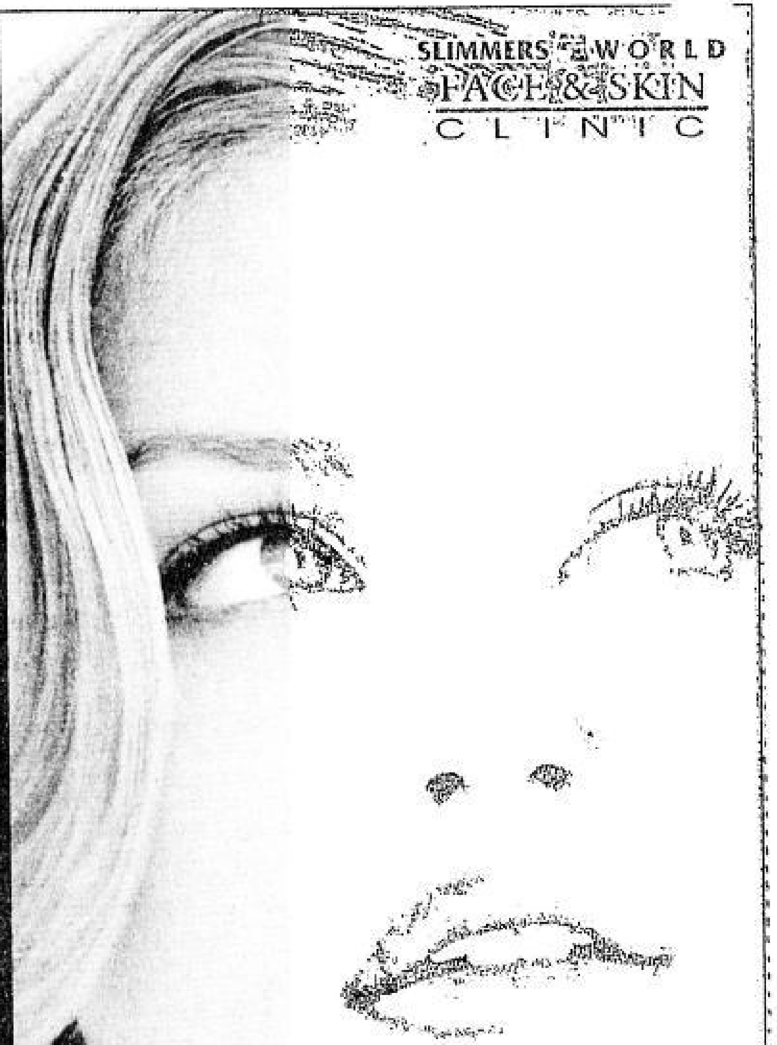
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Encounters with Kerry, Gates in Davos

From page A1

THE AUTHOR enjoys the snow in Davos.

names that attended the dinner hosted by the Lausanne-based security specialist Sicpa Holdings Inc. in Ms Arroyo's honor.

A fan of Porter's, Ms Arroyo said she asked for his autograph, which the author promptly granted.

For Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, his Davos moment was seeing live and in person the imposing 6'4" US Sen. John Kerry, who lost the race for president to George W. Bush.

Fortunately for this journalist, her Davos moments came more than once.

The first came on Jan. 26, the third of the five-day annual meeting, at the Hotel Meierhof here—an up-close-and-personal encounter with Anthony F. Fernandes, chief executive officer of budget airline firm Air Asia based in Malaysia.

The former Warner Music executive, who thinks highly of the talent of Side A and Barbie Almalbis of the defunct Barbie's Cradle, is the apple of the eye of investment analysts because of his remarkable feat of nurturing Air Asia from a small Malaysian airline into one of the world's leaders in the budget fare category.

And the executive, also named a Global Young Leader by the WEF, had just bought 150 more planes because he's just getting started.

Dressed casually in jeans and a white shirt with a bright red Air Asia hat, he gamely posed for a photograph for the books.

I was floating on air.

Fernandes took part in the discussion on Asean's Economic Roadmap here where Ms Arroyo gave the opening remarks.

'Land of the future'

My next Davos moment came later that evening when I took my seat at the gallery of the main hall of the Congress Center to find Mexican President Felipe Calderon giving an impassioned talk on how he believed that his country was "the land of the future."

His session came just before Ms Arroyo was to discuss "Asean's 40 Years—A New Future" with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in the evening.

Calderon was nearing the end of his speech when I came in.

I only got the gist of what he was saying because he spoke in Spanish and I had only 12 units of the subject to help me understand what he was saying.

Nevertheless, a few of his thoughts that I managed to grasp were enough to convince me that my impression from articles on him was correct—he is a leader to reckon with.

Neighboring United States better prepare for what he is prepared to do, I thought.

Gates and Blair

My real surprise for the evening, however, was yet to happen.

I was taking my sweet time walking down the road on my way to a restaurant from the Congress Center, valiantly fighting off the freezing temperature, when I was hurried along by a hulking Swiss policeman.

He said my thoroughly bundled-up body, with gloves and a cap with earmuffs to boot, should walk faster because a VIP was coming up behind me.

When I looked over my shoulder, who did I see but Microsoft Corp.'s William "Bill" Gates III in animated discussion with charismatic British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

I hurried along as fast as I could and then stopped when I got in front of the majestic Hotel Belvedere where the pair were headed.

The encounter took all of about two minutes, but it was enough to give me bragging rights. How many Filipinos can say that they actually saw the two leaders in person, and together at that?

And for a business journalist, seeing Bill Gates, the world's richest man and founder of the world's biggest software company, was like a Beatles fan seeing John Lennon come back to life.

Seeing Gates with Blair, who is sadly about to step aside as prime minister, was an unexpected bonus, like an extra scoop of ice cream on a scorching day.

It was that kind of moment that could only happen in Davos, where business, political and civil society leaders come together once a year to discuss pressing issues of a global scale in a casual yet intense fashion.

They come despite the isolation, the frigid temperature and steady snowfall that are hell to people from the tropics, because they believe in the WEF's commitment to "improve the state of the world."

I slept that night after enjoying authentic cheese fondue and Swiss white wine with the happy thought that I saw Gates and Blair in the flesh.

But there was more.

Shaking hands with Kerry

The next day, while I was waiting to leave for Zurich to accompany Ms Arroyo on the flight home to Manila with the rest of the Filipino reporters, Democratic Sen. John Kerry emerged in the lobby.

Because I was seated near the door, he looked my way and stopped, probably because I had a stupid smile on my face.

Before I knew it, I blurted out that I would have voted for him had I been an American.

He came over, looked me straight in the eye and shook my outstretched hand. Then he told me that if I had been able to vote, he would have been president.

Of course, he was giving me a slick politician's line, but I didn't care.

I thought he certainly had the prestige, the height and even the hair to become president. The penetrating blue eyes did not hurt his image either.

But alas, it was not meant to be.

No Bono encounter

But at least I can say I shook hands with a man who might have been US president, although I was mentally kicking myself because I was starstruck enough to forget to take a picture of that priceless Davos moment.

Then again, I had witnesses.

The only thing missing from my string of Davos moments was a close encounter of the U2's Bono kind, but it was probably asking too much.

After all, I had already had so many.

Filipino maid in HK theft posts bail

From page A1

bond while her appeal to overturn her conviction was pending.

"I do not know how to express how I feel right now. If only I could talk to each one of my fellow Filipino workers to thank them for their help," said Catacutan, whose bail was raised through a fund-raising drive among Filipino workers.

"I did not know I would be released today. I now want to clear my name. I want to leave Hong Kong without any criminal record," she added.

Catacutan was found guilty last Dec. 11 on two charges of theft for stealing photographs and a letter from Cheung and his wife, retired actress Mei Lo.

Magistrate Winston Leung sentenced Catacutan to a six-month prison term without bail, creating an uproar in the Filipino community in Hong Kong.

Clutching a Bible and some personal belongings, Catacutan walked out of jail at around 5:25 p.m. She will be staying at the Filipino Workers Resource Center, a shelter of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, while her appeal is pending.

Philippine Consul General Al A. Vicente welcomed Catacutan's temporary release from custody.

"This is a very welcome development, I'm glad it happened," Vicente said. "Thanks to all those who helped make it happen."

He said he hoped Catacutan would be equally successful in her fight to get her conviction quashed.

Confrontation with wife

Catacutan's troubles began last July when she found photographs of Cheung and his wife while cleaning the actor's room.

The following month, Catacutan found a photograph of Mei Lo in the rubbish bin and decided to keep it with the other two in an open shelf in a room she shared with another maid in Cheung's house.

Catacutan began working for Cheung last April but did not have a good relationship with Mei Lo. Cheung's wife later learned about the purloined photographs from the other maid and confronted Catacutan, who decided to quit, giving the couple the standard one-month notice.

In her testimony in court, Catacutan said she explained to the actor last July that she was leaving because of her confrontation with Mei Lo over the photographs.

However, Cheung at the time decided to do nothing about it and stopped Catacutan from leaving. The singer was then in the process of moving from his house on Stubbs Road to Repulse Bay and wanted her to stay on.

Help from HK barristers

Catacutan agreed and the Cheungs went on a holiday in Japan. But on their return on Aug. 27 and upon the completion of their transfer to Repulse Bay, the singer promptly dismissed the Filipino maid.

Asked in court why the pictures were with her, Catacutan said she was a big fan of Hong Kong's leading exponent of Canto-pop, a hybrid of Chinese ballads and western songs.

Catacutan's temporary freedom was secured with the help of two Hong Kong female lawyers, solicitor Ivy Tong and barrister Ody Lai, who both worked pro bono.

The 45-year-old singer rose to fame in the mid-1980s to become one of the so-called "Heavenly Kings of Song," along with Aaron Kwok, Andy Lau and Leon Lai.

In his decision last month, Magistrate Leung berated the maid for keeping the photographs.

Defense dismissed

He dismissed Catacutan's defense that Cheung had known as early as July that she had the photographs and that his inaction then ostensibly condoned her keeping them.

The judge said a celebrity's personal possession could command a high price if sold in the market and suggested that Catacutan's action amounted to a "betrayal."

Lai filed a review of the sentence before Magistrate Leung, but the judge dismissed it.

The domestic helper has also formally applied for legal aid. If granted, she can choose any legal counsel she wants to represent her when the High Court tackles her appeal.

Judge Longley granted Catacutan bail on condition that she surrender her passport and other travel documents to the court and report to the police three times a week, said Vice Consul Noel Novicio.

"It was a very quick hearing; it lasted only 10 minutes. He already gave an indication at the start that he was going to grant her bail," said Novicio, who was allowed to attend the closed-door bail hearing.

Lai said she was confident that Catacutan's conviction would be reversed.

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 29 ISSUE, a story on Page A2 carried the erroneous headline, "Military: MNLF helping us against MILF." In the story, a high military officer confirmed that the Moro National Liberation Front is helping the government forces hunt down the Abu Sayyaf Group—not the MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front)—in Sulu.

* * *

IN THE SAME ISSUE, a story on Page A8—"GMA: The belle of the ball"—misspelled the first name of the person to whom President Macapagal-Arroyo attributed the comment that the dinner given in her honor had the best attendance among all the WEF business dinners and luncheons in Davos. Ms Arroyo was referring to Hans—not Hand—Schwab. He is a Swiss businessman and former WEF board member.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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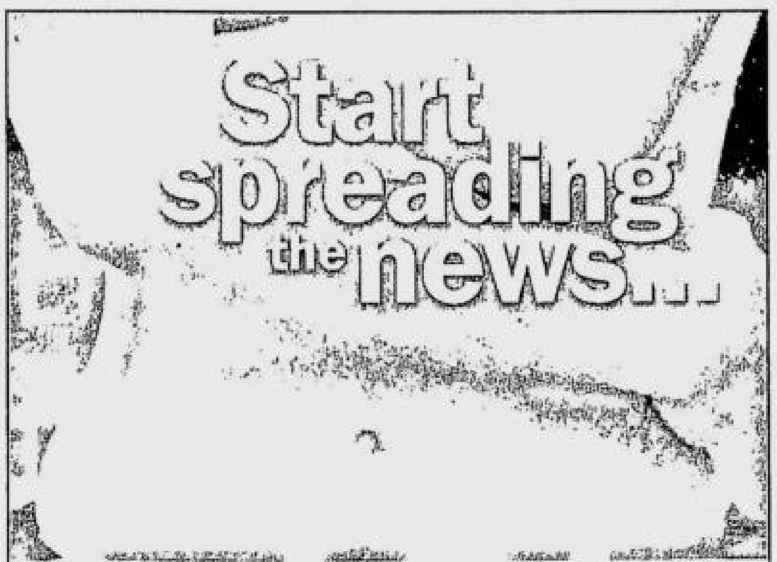

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ANG with one of his lawyers Ruth Castelo

RAFFY LERMA

Atong's guilty plea questioned

From page A1

The criminal information against Estrada and the testimony of Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson showed that Ang delivered the P130 million in excise tax originally meant for the tobacco-growing province to Estrada's residence on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan, Metro Manila, in August 1998.

Accessory to plunder

"Why doesn't he just plead guilty to being an accessory to plunder?" Villaruz said.

The Sandiganbayan special division is trying Estrada, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, lawyer Edward Serapio and Ang for plunder.

Estrada is facing plunder charges for allegedly amassing some P4 billion in payoffs from illegal gambling operations, tobacco tax kickbacks and business commissions.

He is also charged with perjury for allegedly falsely declaring his assets.

In the plea bargaining agreement, Ang, Estrada's former gambling buddy, pleaded guilty to the crime of corruption of a public official in exchange for his admission that he had conspired with Estrada to divert the P130 million and that he would return the P25 million he had earned from the transaction.

The deal was signed by Ang, Villamor, Villa-Ignacio, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño and Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

If approved by the Sandiganbayan, the agreement would allow Ang to enter a plea of guilty for the lesser offense of bribery and avoid a possible sentence of 40 years for plunder.

As part of the deal, Ang would assist in the prosecution of cases "in which he has personal knowledge."

"He benefited from the bribe money, but he did not give or offer the bribe," Associate Justice Diosdado Peralta said.

Nonexistent crime

The Revised Penal Code defines corruption of a public official as making offers or promises, or giving gifts or presents to public officials in exchange for the commission of a crime in relation to his or her duty as a public servant.

"There is no allegation in the amended information [that] P130 million was given by Ang ... (He) is confessing to a nonexistent crime," Villaruz said.

Being an accessory to plunder carries a penalty of eight years in prison compared with up to six years for bribery, according to Villa-Ignacio. "With the mitigating factor of a voluntary admission, it can go down further," he said.

Peralta also tackled the Estrada defense panel's criticism of the plea bargain deal as it contained derogatory information against the ex-President.

"What would be the problem if it says our client committed plunder, period?" Peralta asked.

Estrada lawyer Rene Saguisag had asked for a clarification from the court if the deal would be used against the former President.

Saguisag, in an earlier manifestation, said the defense panel should have been given notice of the contents of the deal.

Necessary to justify plea

[The clause on the alleged conspiracy] was needed to convince the court ... We thought it was necessary to justify the plea for a lesser offense," Villamor said in court.

"If we put President Estrada in a bad light, we apologize. But it is something beyond our control," he said.

Villamor maintained that the contents of the plea bargain could not be used as evidence against Estrada because it was an agreement between Ang and the government prosecutors.

Ang's defense lawyers—Villamor and Ruth Castelo—argued in vain to convince the anti-graft court to give due course to the deal submitted to the Sandiganbayan on Jan. 24.

3 days for comment

Sensing that they would not get a favorable decision on the agreement at yesterday's pre-trial proceedings, Villamor asked the court for three days to allow him and Castelo to comment on the views on the deal expressed by the justices.

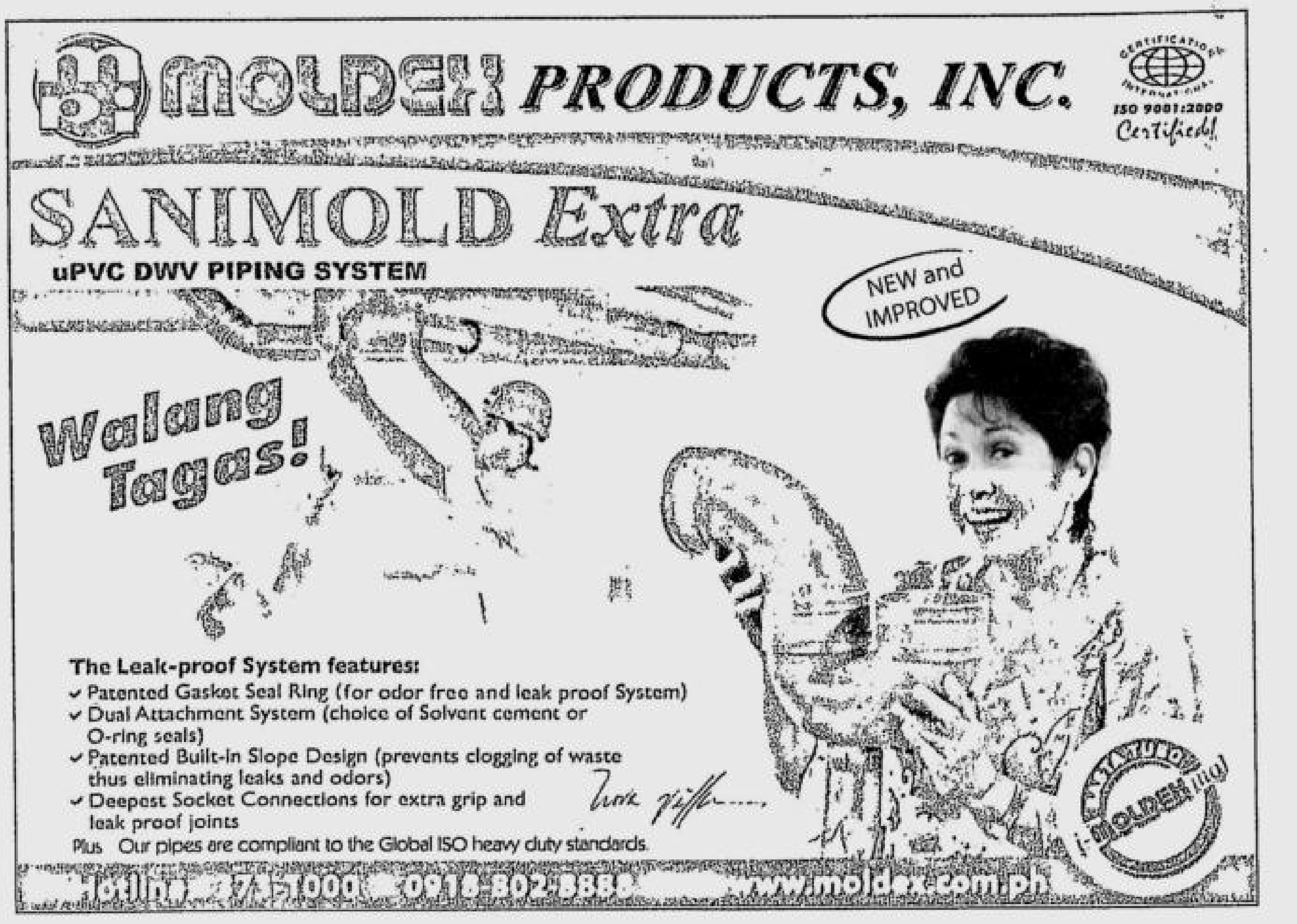
Asked what Ang's lawyers thought of the justices' view that Ang may have confessed to a crime nonexistent in the case information, Castelo said: "We'll consider that."

Villa-Ignacio said government prosecutors would stick with the deal.

"What do you call giving P130 million to Mr. Estrada? At that time he was the President," Villa-Ignacio said, seeing a clear element of corruption of a public official in Ang's delivery of the funds to Polk Street.

He said the clause in the plea bargain deal that said Ang conspired with Estrada to divert the P130 million may also be removed following a review.

"It won't be used against Mr. Estrada anyway. Perhaps we can already take it out. Let's see," he said.



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Melo panel tags Palparan in slays

From page A1

Melo confirmed that among those mentioned in the fact-finding report was Palparan, who retired in September 2006. Leftist groups had labelled Palparan "*berdugo*" for the spate of killings during his tenure as brigade and division commander in Mindoro and Samar provinces, respectively. *(See In the Know and reaction on Page A1).*

"There are several pages there on Palparan. You know, he has said he inspired them. You can hook the fish through the mouth," Melo said.

Melo was referring to a media interview given by Palparan where he admitted he had "inspired" some people to "punish" suspected New People's Army rebels who had committed crimes in their communities.

Palparan was one of four military officials who testified before the commission. They were the only witnesses who responded to the commission's summonses.

Leftist groups had boycotted the hearings of the commission, saying it lacked credibility and independence.

Aside from Melo, the other commission members were National Bureau of Investigation Director Nestor Mantaring, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño, University of the Philippines Regent Nelia Gonzales and Butuan City Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos.

Gov't response unsatisfactory

On Sunday, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral statement saying that the response by the government and the military to the allegations of extrajudicial killings was "most unsatisfactory (and) their protestations of concern not too convincing."

The bishops blamed the killings on leftist and rightist groups.

The motive for the killing of De Luna was not immediately known, but SPO1 Juan Forbes said he would not discount the possibility that the victim's involvement in Bayan Muna could be the reason.

De Luna was brought to the Samar Provincial Hospital but the doctors there declared him dead on arrival. Forbes said the assailant used a .45-cal. pistol.

The attackers were described as being between 25 and 30 years old.

De Luna's wife Concepcion, who is a Bayan provincial coordinator and provincial board member, could not be reached for comment.

However, Katrina Castillo, Bayan regional coordinator, said Concepcion had told her that she and her husband had been receiving death threats.

Samar Vice Gov. Jesus Redaja said that he had asked police authorities in Catbalogan to solve the latest killing.

'Act decisively now'

"They should act decisively now and show the people that they really have the ability to solve a crime incident, regardless of the position in society of the victim. This is too much for us to ignore," Redaja said in a phone interview.

On Jan. 17, Augusto Daclitan, 53, a former member of the New People's Army and provincial coordinator of the anticommunist group Alliance of Nationalism and Democracy, was gunned down. This was followed two-days later by the killing of another "military asset," Alfonso Sabillo, 48.

Both cases have remained unsolved.

In Catarman, Northern Samar, Jose Maria Cui, 53, Bayan provincial coordinator, was killed on Friday in front of his students at the University of the Eastern Philippines.

In Tacloban City, the regional spokesperson of Bayan, Flor Acbo, 54, escaped an assassination attempt last week by two motorcycle-riding armed men in Barangay Nula-Tula.

IN THE KNOW

Who is Palparan?

RETIRED MAJ. GEN. JOVITO PALPARAN, branded a "berdugo (butcher)" by activists, has been blamed for hundreds of cases of human rights violations in different parts of the country.

Despite the accusations, the Arroyo administration has praised Palparan for his exemplary performance in counterinsurgency operations.

The President awarded Palparan in 2002 the "Gawad sa Kaunlaran" and made him a brigadier general in January 2003. The following year, he was promoted to major general and appointed chief of staff of the Army.

Militant organizations allege that Palparan was responsible for 326 human rights cases, including about 80 killings, in Mindoro during his term as head of the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade from 2001 to 2003.

In February 2005, he was installed chief of the 8th Infantry Division based in Eastern Visayas.

There, he was accused of masterminding 199 cases of killings, disappearances, harassment, torture and other violations.

In September 2005, he took command of the 7th ID in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija. Within a month, 13 leaders and members of party-list group Bayan Muna and its affiliate organizations in Central Luzon were reported killed.

Before he retired on Sept. 11, 2006, the New People's Army told Palparan that he was a "dead man walking."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said in October last year that he was wooing Palparan to become an intelligence and security adviser in his department.

Palparan was born on Sept. 11, 1950, in Cagayan de Oro City, and grew up in his father's hometown of Malitbog, Southern Leyte. He joined the Armed Forces in 1974.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

'Killings not part of our operations'

From page A1

sponsibility is," he told the INQUIRER by phone on Monday.

By his explanation, command responsibility means accountability for the results of military operations. What his command launched were "legitimate military operations," Palparan said.

"Killings, even abductions, are not part of our operations," he insisted.

When he was in active service, Palparan deployed special operations teams to urban and rural areas believed to be the logistics, financial and mass support of communist rebels. At the same time, his men attacked guerrilla fronts, he said days before his retirement.

The Central Luzon chapter of the human rights group Karapatan has listed 136 cases of abuse during Palparan's stint in the region. At least 71 of these were summary executions, five massacres, 14 frustrated killings and 46 disappearances in all of the region's seven provinces as of Sept. 2, 2006.

But in Monday's interview, Palparan said he "suspected that some military men may have been involved in the killings to get back at rebels who killed their kin." He did not elaborate.

Accusations 'very general'

Army chief Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, former commander of the military's Northern Luzon Command, under which Palparan's command operated, said the Melo Commission "still has to prove that soldiers were really involved (in the killings)."

"The accusations are very general," Tolentino said by phone.

While he confirmed that the military practiced command responsibility as a policy, he said the commission would also have to determine at what level the responsibility fell.

Tolentino said he had made "unofficial inquiries" about the killings to find out if soldiers were involved. Not one, he claimed, had a hand in any of those incidents.

Of the cases monitored by the INQUIRER, only one soldier had been charged and this was in connection with the murder of Ricardo Ramos, president of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac Labor Union on Oct. 25, 2005.

Loren, Chiz spurn Palace offer of slots ...

From page A1

confirmed the talks with Legarda, and former opposition Senators Vicente Sotto III and Tessie Aquino-Oreta, said there were no ongoing talks with the Sorsogon congressman.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said he was not aware of any discussions with Escudero, who is his friend.

Sen. Edgardo Angara, leader of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP), said his party had joined forces with the Nacionalista and Liberal parties toward forming a so-called "Third Force."

He said the Third Force would field a complete senatorial slate to be composed of reelectionist senators and six others from the three parties.

Angara said that NP president Manny Villar, the coalition's titular head, would make a formal announcement of the coalition's senatorial lineup next week.

"This middle force idea is going to catch fire," Angara said in an interview. "This is really a genuine choice for the people."

Patching up with Ping

Angara said he would have no problem working with Sen. Panfilo Lacson, his political nemesis, if they ended up on the same ticket.

"I don't have to sleep with him, right?" he said, adding that his differences with Lacson were personal in nature and not a matter of principle.

On reports about his possible inclusion in the administration lineup, Angara said there was no way that members of their coalition would join it.

Reacting to Angara's statement about them being possibly on the same ticket, Lacson said: "It is not for us to say that we may or should stay under one ticket. It is a matter of consensus among the different leaders of the broad coalition of political parties, civil society, religious and other opposition forces."

Liberals also moving

Also off and running, the Liberal Party wing of Sen. Franklin Drilon yesterday officially presented Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan and Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III as its candidates for the Senate.

The group made the announcement at the LP's 61st anniversary celebration held at Club Filipino.

Pangilinan and Aquino accepted the nominations.

In a surprise move, LP spokesperson Chito Gascon also nominated Bukidnon Rep. Nereus Acosta, Quezon Rep. Lorenzo Tañada III, Muntinlupa Rep. Rufino Biazon and former Batanes Rep. Florencio "Butch" Abad as possible candidates.

Until yesterday's announcement, only Pangilinan and Aquino had been regarded as the party's serious candidates. The nomination of the four others was seen as a party strategy to gain leverage in its ongoing coalition talks with the other parties.

Drilon said the party would submit the names of the six "potential candidates" to its coalition partners—the Nacionalista Party, Aksyon Demokratiko, Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, and UNO's Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino and PDP-Laban.

Abad, LP vice president for policy, said that the move was designed to offset the "erosion of the unified opposition" as an offshoot of defections.

"It seems that the opposition is disintegrating so I think it's important that the party is prepared to constitute a real opposition, a unified slate," he told reporters.

Sonia's search

"We don't want the ranks of a unified, genuine opposition to be eroded simply by defections to the other side because Malacañang is actively maneuvering to try to divide and weaken what was originally built as a unified, solid, winning opposition slate."

Sonia Roco, widow of the late Sen. Raul Roco, is still shopping around for a coalition to join in her bid for a Senate seat.

Roco said at the Kapihan sa Manila forum: "I'm looking for a coalition. Hopefully, we will find the right one so we will be credible to the Filipino voters."

She also said: "I cannot be administration. The last words of my husband were Gloria resign."

Ms Arroyo all but confirmed that Malacañang was moving to include members of the opposition in its senatorial lineup.

"The principle of a unity ticket? Yes, yes," she said when asked whether she favored moves to build a senatorial slate with oppositionists in it.

"I have always been calling for unity. I have been forever calling for unity from 2001. I have been calling for unity and reconciliation," she said, responding to questions in a one-on-one interview with a reporter.

But Ms Arroyo made it clear during the interview that she did not want to talk about politics "because there are other political allies who are taking care of that, not me."

"All I can say is I am going to concentrate on my work," she said.

Bro. Mike also helping

El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde himself is keen about the Team Unity concept being pushed by the administration coalition but wants Ms Arroyo to have no hand in the formation of a hybrid senatorial slate.

A confidant of Velarde told the INQUIRER that the influential religious leader met in the past week with top political strategists of the coalition who were attempting to get his endorsement of the proposed unity team.

The confidant said that Velarde was "all for" the formation of such a team but that "Brother Mike wants the President to take a nonpartisan stand in the elections."

"This means that she should refrain from influencing who will be on the unity ticket," the confidant said, adding that Velarde wanted Ms Arroyo's role in the elections limited to local government officials. *With reports from TJ Burgonio, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Christine O. Avendaño and Leila B. Salaverria*

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GMA calls for 4-party summit on May polls

From page A1

To pave the way for transparent and peaceful polls, she called for a summit with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), the Commission on Elections, poll watchdogs and police.

"We assure the CBCP and the Filipino people that this administration will police its own ranks to protect and advance all democratic processes," Ms Arroyo said in a statement.

Elections in the Philippines are often messy, accompanied by a rise in political killings and allegations of cheating on all sides.

The President was responding to the CBCP pastoral letter that offered guidance to the Catholic faithful in the May polls.

She did not address the CBCP statement on Sunday that many of the country's political problems could be traced to "unresolved questions concerning the conduct of the past elections," which included the "Hello Garci" scandal that marred the 2004 presidential election.

The scandal involved the wiretapping of Ms Arroyo's telephone conversations with an election official believed to be Virgilio Garcillano. The opposition has claimed that the conversations showed that Ms Arroyo cheated in the 2004 presidential election.

The President had said the telephone call was a lapse in judgment but denied any rigging in the election.

Other unresolved issues were the P728-million fertilizer fund scam and the not yet fully disclosed Mayuga report on the alleged participation of military officers in electoral fraud three years ago, according to CBCP vice president Antonio Ledesma.

The P728 million originally earmarked for the purchase of farm inputs was believed to have been distributed to administration allies to ensure Ms Arroyo's victory in the May 2004 presidential election.

Time to move forward

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye asked for closure to the "Hello Garci" scandal, saying that what is important is for "stakeholders to heed the call of the President ... to see to it that the 2007 polls will be honest, peaceful and credible."

He told reporters it was time for the country to move forward.

Bunye said it would be "a challenge to everyone to work together to make the polls honest, peaceful and credible."

Impeachment

In the May polls, Filipinos will elect 12 out of 24 senators, all House of Representatives members (about 260), and nearly 17,500 governors, mayors and other local officials.

Analysts have said the elections were crucial because opposition groups could win enough House seats to impeach Ms Arroyo over vote-rigging and corruption allegations and send her to trial in the Senate.

Ms Arroyo's House allies were able to use their overwhelming numbers to block two impeachment bids against her.

In an interview, Ms Arroyo told reporters that she was heeding the call of the Church and nongovernment organizations and that they should "try to work together to see how in fact we can make sure that (clean, honest and orderly election) is achieved."

Facilitator

"I asked (Cabinet Secretary) Ric Saludo to be the one to touch base with the ones we feel will be willing to work with us," she said, acknowledging that the Palace would merely facilitate the holding of the summit.

In a statement, Ms Arroyo asked participants to firm up a "comprehensive plan on stabilizing election hot spots, focused monitoring in possible areas of fraud, transparent poll procedures, and checks on illegal spending."

She called on "candidates from all sides to come together in fair and friendly terms and assert their collective political maturity and bolster their platforms by propoor and development plans instead of the usual dirty politics."

"Part of our quest to join the ranks of the First World in 20 years is to clean up the polls and let everyone take the first step forward," the President said.

Abalos for Feb. 12 summit

The Comelec welcomed Ms Arroyo's call for a four-party summit.

"It's a beautiful idea," said Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

He suggested that the summit be held on Feb. 12, or after the end of the filing of the certificates of candidacy for senators and party-list groups.

"The political configuration in our country is still forming. Coalitions are still being made and there are still no final lineups of candidates," Abalos said.

Candidates' forum

The election watchdog Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting offered to co-host with the Comelec a "candidates' forum" to discuss how the polls could be kept clean and honest, the Comelec chief said.

He also welcomed the CBCP call for vigilance during the elections to ensure the sanctity of the ballot. *With a report from AP*

Women in power less afraid to show soft side

From page A1

mothers and/or grandmothers.

For some, the questions were complicated: Is this a throwback, or a step forward? Is it politically smart?

No need to be defensive

For a long time women seeking high office, particularly an executive office, were advised to play down their softer, domestic side, and play up their toughness. Focus groups often found voters deeply concerned about whether women were strong enough, tough enough, to lead.

CLINTON

PELOSI

Today, many political strategists say that women no longer have to be so defensive.

Voters have grown more accustomed to women in powerful positions.

Motherhood and a focus on children can become one more political asset to be showcased and embraced—a way of humanizing a candidate and connecting with voters, especially other women, strategists say.

Pelosi took the Speaker's gavel in a carefully structured tableau filled with children, some of them her own grandchildren.

Clinton held the first event of her presidential campaign surrounded by children, clutching the hand of a 4-year-old girl at a health care clinic, where she announced her support for expanded health coverage for children.

Aides to Pelosi and Clinton object to the idea that this is in any way contrived.

Pelosi did, in fact, raise five children before she ran for office, and Clinton raised one and has been an advocate on children's issues since her days in law school.

Good political reasons

But it's the candidates who decide how to tell their story, and there are good political reasons for Pelosi and Clinton to highlight the maternal.

For Pelosi, relentlessly caricatured by the Republicans last year as a hard-edged, tax-raising liberal, the image of mother and grandmother takes the edge off the ideological cartoon.

As Karen O'Connor, director of the Women and Politics Institute at American University, puts it: "For Nancy Pelosi, it becomes, 'OK, am I going to be the San Francisco liberal, or the woman who relates to all voting women, because I've raised five kids, I have several wonderful grandchildren and I can also run your House.'"

For Clinton, highlighting the maternal is a way of building on what polls and strategists suggest are her clear advantages, like strength and intelligence, while compensating for what are widely considered her liabilities—a coolness, an excess of caution and a capacity to so polarize the electorate that many voters question her ability to win. *New York Times News Service*

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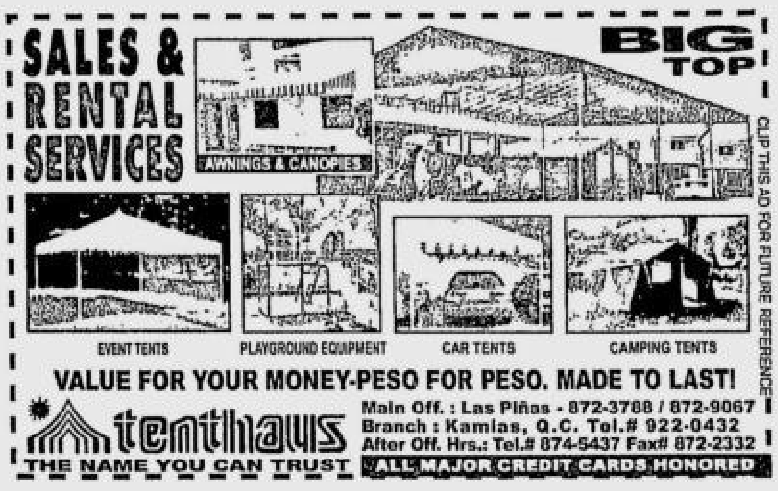

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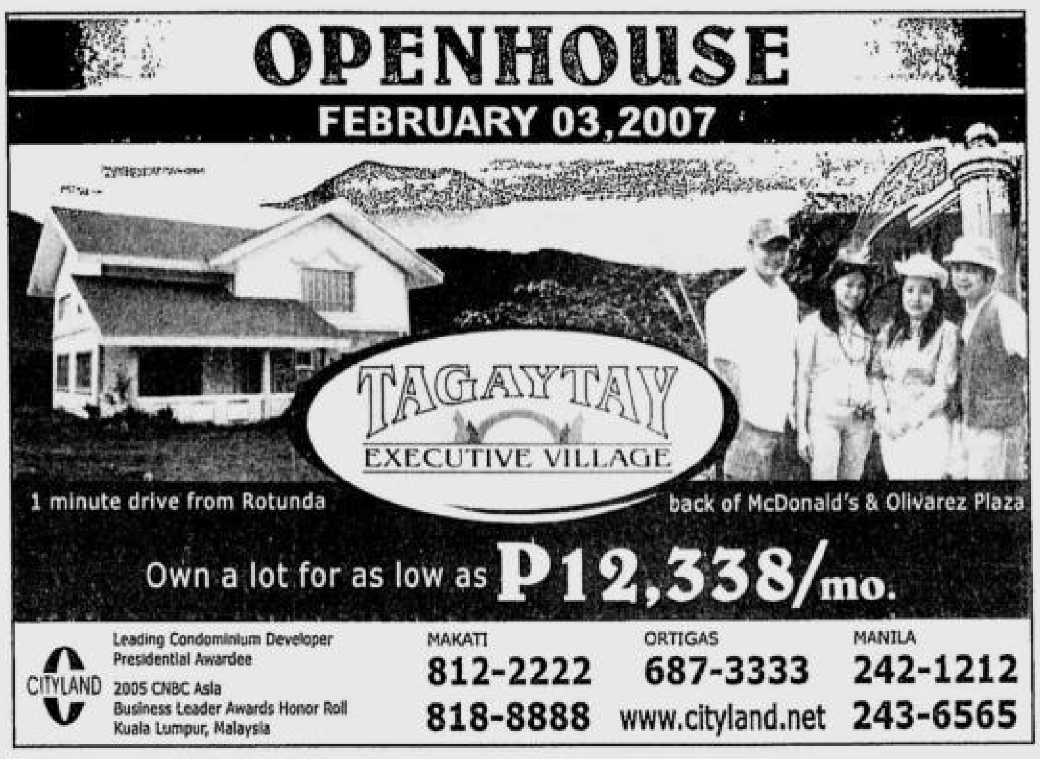

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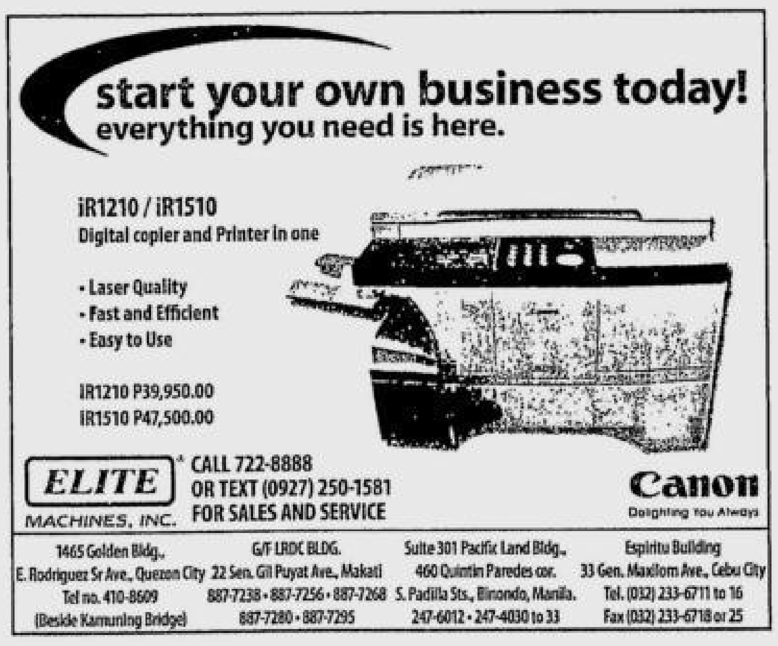

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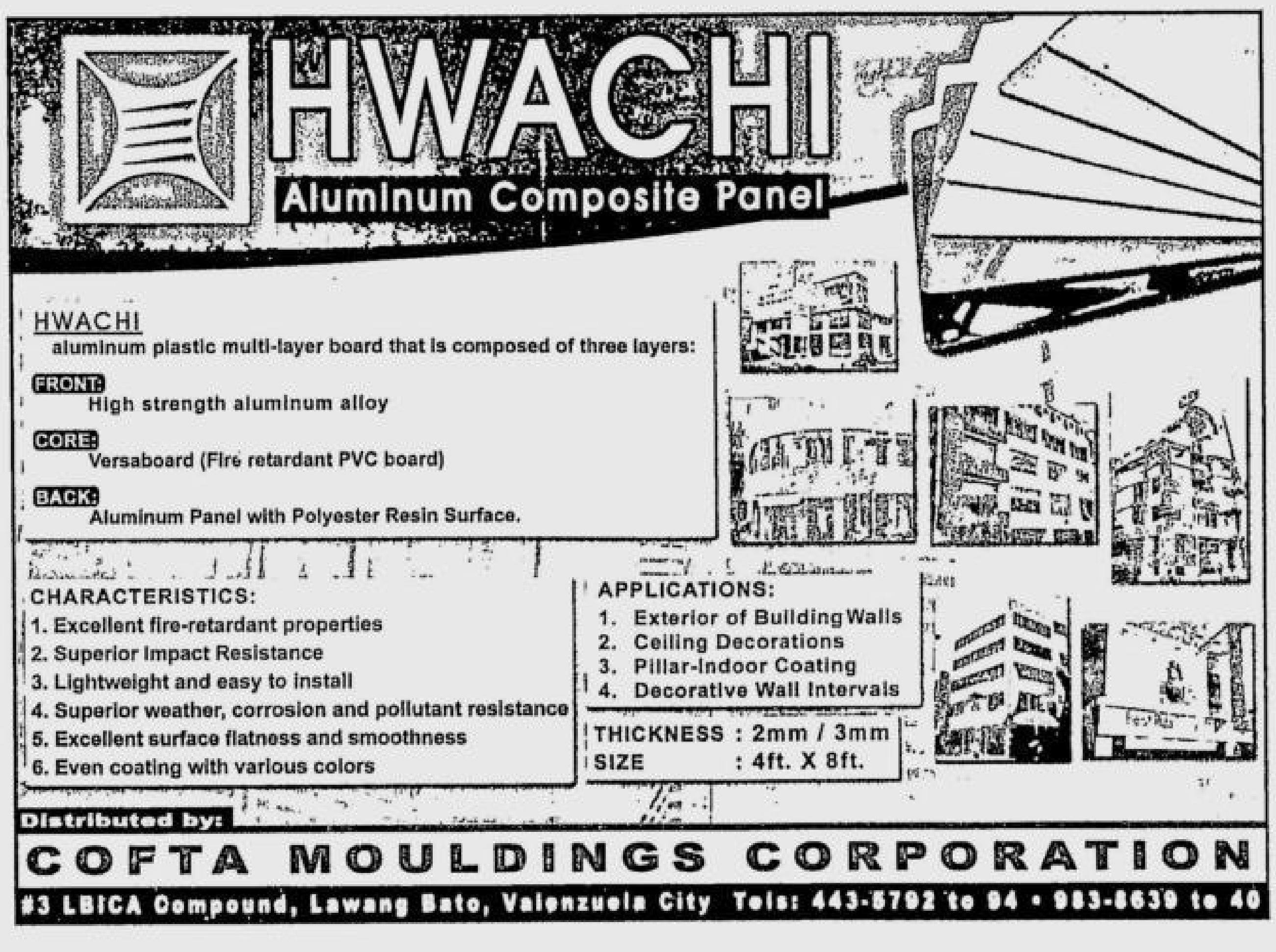

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OPINION

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The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•Subscription Hotline 896-6000

Alarming diplomacy

EDITORIAL

TRUST THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER LULI TO have a better sense of order and justice, and a higher sense of the nation's sovereignty, than most of the Cabinet members—or probably, even the President herself.

Last Saturday, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the Department of Justice was pursuing charges against 30 Chinese nationals caught poaching last month in the Tubbataha Reefs National Marine Park. Gonzalez said the government was not dropping the case against the Chinese fishermen, after he learned that Luli Arroyo was watching the case closely and was not happy about the poachers being allowed to go scot-free.

The Chinese poachers, who had been caught for intruding into the protected waters of the Tubbataha Reef, were released last week. The fishermen's group Pamalakaya said they were released after Chinese Ambassador Li Jinjun made a demand in a letter to Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap. Fernando Hicap, Pamalakaya chair, accused Romulo and Yap of conspiring with Malacañang "in selling the country's national sovereignty and patrimony to Chinese invaders."

The 30 Chinese fishermen were arrested by the Coast Guard last Dec. 21 for illegal fishing off Tubbataha Reef in southern Palawan. They were charged with violating the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act, the Fisheries Code and Wildlife Act of the Philippines, and a provincial ordinance banning commercial fishing vessels from the Tubbataha Reef. If found guilty, the 30 Chinese could be jailed for 12 to 20 years and fined P120,000 each.

Found aboard their ship "Hoi Wan" were at least 1,300 endangered fish species, including 300 *mameng* (Napoleon wrasse), 500 *lapu-lapu* and 500 red snappers. Also found aboard the ship were 11 *sampans* (small boats) and several air compressors that were apparently being used for illegal fishing activities.

Six of the 30 Chinese fishermen were released on bail early this month so that they could look after their vessel docked at the Puerto Princesa Port. The remaining 24 were also later allowed to post bail. At this point we don't know if the 30 fishermen are still in the Philippines or if they have left the country and are now physically beyond the reach of Philippine law.

The case of the 30 Chinese poachers is not the first, neither do we expect it to be the last. Last March 29, 17 Chinese fishermen convicted of poaching on Philippine waters were pardoned by President Macapagal-Arroyo and ordered expelled by the Bureau of Immigration.

In September, two Chinese poachers were arrested for killing endangered turtles and poisoning hectares of coral reefs by using sodium cyanide. They were later released upon the intercession of the Department of Foreign Affairs without the filing of any charges.

On Oct. 24, Chinese fishermen were caught fishing illegally off the coast of Palawan. They were charged with illegal fishing, poaching in Philippine waters and catching endangered species, but after that nothing was heard about them. Then came this latest case of the 30 Chinese fishermen.

Sen. Jamby Madrigal said that of the 900 foreigners caught poaching in the waters off Palawan, 660 were Chinese. Almost all of the arrested fishermen escaped prosecution by leaving the country after posting bail, except for the 17 who were arrested in 2004 in Balabac. These were the 17 recently pardoned by the President and released after they paid a $50,000 fine.

Poaching in Philippine waters by foreign fishermen has reached alarming proportions, undoubtedly encouraged by the climate of leniency and impunity created for them by Philippine officials who are charged with enforcing the nation's laws and upholding national sovereignty.

This state of affairs has to stop if we are to preserve our marine environment and conserve food from the sea for ourselves and our children. The nation's patrimony and sovereignty cannot be sacrificed in favor of diplomatic relations. The Department of Justice and the DFA have to stop doing the dirty work of freeing poachers caught fishing illegally in Philippine waters.

In the "Nicole" rape case, the government allowed the transfer of the convicted Marine from a Philippine jail to the US Embassy, all in the name of good RP-US relations. Now, the Philippine government is again bending over backwards, freeing arrested Chinese poachers, all in the name of RP-Chinese relations. How can we expect other nations to respect us when we allow ourselves to be bullied by other countries?

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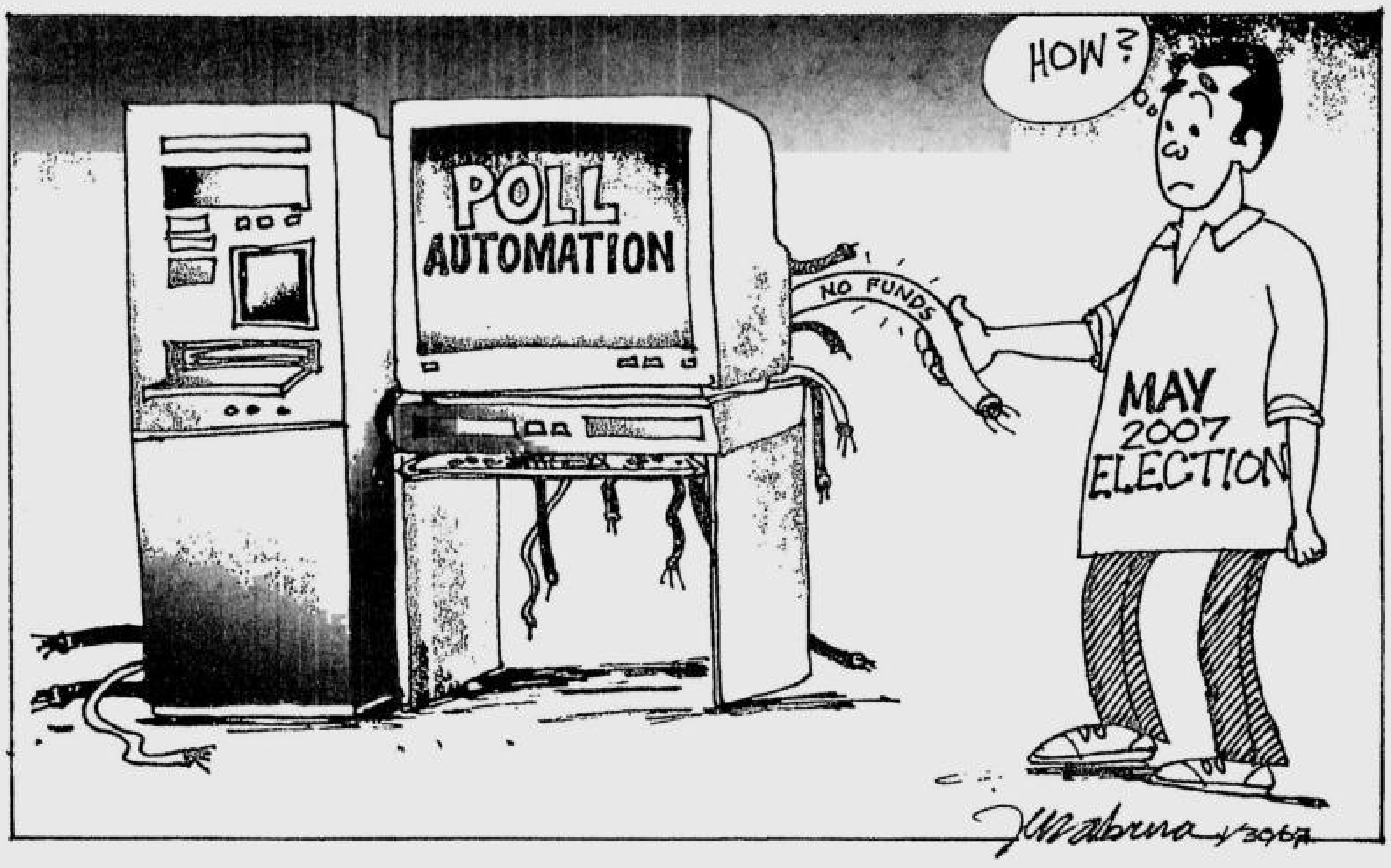


Burdens of disease

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"HEALTH IS THE SECOND BLESSING WE mortals are capable of," Izaak Walton once wrote. I can't recall the first. But the fear of falling ill haunts all, especially the poor. That concern stems from their experience with government's inadequate health systems. At local drugstores, some medicines are priced 5 to 18 times more than in other countries.

Those lusting for election exploit this anxiety. Cebu City Mayor Tomas Osmeña, for example, gave PhilHealth cards, valid for a year, to 35,000 beneficiaries (aka voters). Could this be misconstrued as politicking? "It's not misconstrued," he scoffed. "It is what it is."

It is, in fact, far more.

The health cards lapse after the votes are tallied. But many candidates ignore a more basic issue: The "epidemiological transition" that is sweeping through Asian countries. Harvard University and World Health Organization report that the patterns of illnesses and deaths are drastically changing in poor countries like the Philippines—and straining health systems.

Where maladies of the poor once dominated, ailments of the affluent are emerging with a vengeance, Harvard and WHO note in their study: "The Global Burden of Disease." Tuberculosis, diarrhea, pneumonia, measles, dengue, infant malnutrition are being rapidly overtaken by stroke, diabetes, obesity, etc.

Only the very poorest countries have not started this transition to Western type diseases, University of Sydney's Dr. Bruce Neal writes in Far Eastern Economic Review. Large scale studies, for example, found that "[o]ne in eight of those aged over 30 had diabetes. And an equal number showed pre-diabetes." Strokes were spiraling.

"Obsolete" diseases still ravage the slums and uplands of the Philippines, Indonesia, Nepal or Sudan. But in affluent and urbanized Singapore, Germany, Korea or Hong Kong, as well as in the "gated enclaves" of the rich here, fat-saturated diets, sedentary lifestyles and obesity boost the incidence of chronic diseases.

Cheek by jowl, the overfed and ill-nourished suffer their differing ailments. "Potentates goodly in girth" has popularized the fat-reducing Xenical. But chronic hunger stunts 32 out of every 100 kids, "Philippine Human Development Report 2006" points out. And 20 percent of infants are puny underweights. In Cebu, 28 out of every 100 don't have access to safe potable water.

Scientists have crafted new "burden-of-disease" indicators to track this transition's effects. Used since the mid-1990s, this new gauge adds up "life years lost due to diseases" and early graves, meaning, years wasted by pre-mature deaths, University of Ulster's S.R. Osmani and Houston's A. Bhargaya explain.

The novel tape measure is known as "Dalys"—shorthand for "disability adjusted life-years per thousand of population." Among other things, "Dalys" found that: the total life years lost per 1,000 Filipinos—like the 3.6 billion men, women and children who live in Asia today—amounted to 259 years.

Losses of such magnitude can beggar a nation. But the *trapos* do not factor such issues into their agendas. Hence, they are blind to the implications of a warning from the Asian Development Bank: The two phases of this "transition in this burden of disease" do not follow in sequence. In fact, they interlock.

As a result, richer and poorer countries "share a common predicament: that of an overlapping health transition," ADB's Review points out. Nations like the Philippines do not have the option of solving one crisis at a time. Instead, "they must tackle simultaneously problems the western world had the privilege of tackling sequentially." Emerging Asia will not have this "luxury."

But problems spill far beyond the casting of the ballot. Health will be costlier in the future, as populations age, ADB cautions. Articulate groups in cities will seek to skew limited budgets toward the treatment of their chronic diseases. "This will perpetuate the disadvantage to the poor."

Indeed, needy countries should not "emulate Western style physician-driven programs," adds Dr. Bryce Neal. "(They) provide a high-cost solution for the wealthy few." Filipinos allocate the equivalent of $174 per capita for health, UNDP's Human Development Report notes. The comparative figure for Malaysians is $374 and $1,074 for Koreans.

Over-worked, undersupplied and underpaid municipal health workers close the health gap for most Filipinos, on a daily basis, in 79 provinces and 117 cities. They tap into the rich trove of traditional medicinal plants: from *lagundi* for coughs to *ampalaya* for diabetes.

It's an uphill fight. As an Inquirer "Talk of the Town" feature asked: Were multinational drug lobbies, with a few susceptible doctors, behind the downgrading of *ampalaya* (momordica charantia), long listed as a scientifically validated medicinal plant? That move bankrupted thousands of small *ampalaya* farmers. And it stripped municipal health workers of a tool in their kits.

Now, Health Secretary Francisco Duque is reported to have dusted the scientific studies on *ampalaya* that were shoved under the rug. He could reinstate the plant—and turn attention to the next 10 medicinal plants that health workers could use.

"San Carlos University studies, in Cebu's mountains, found over 200 medicinal plants," Dr. Franz Siedenchwarz reported. "But only one has been commercially exploited—marijuana."

(E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

Conspirator

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I REMEMBER THAT THERE WAS MUCH debate among the Conspiracy Café people about whether to charge entrance fee at the gate or only at the "Music Room." The place has a garden outside, which is where people who just want to talk hang around; and a small room inside which is where people who want to listen to the performers perform amble to.

Eventually, proponents of the latter won out. The speakers aimed at the garden to enable the patrons there to hear the performances as well were taken out, and only the music room charged an entrance fee. It stood to reason: Only those patrons who chose to bathe in the waters of the musical, and magical, springs inside needed to pay for it. Listening to those glorious sounds was a privilege, and one that came at so small a price.

I recall this now with no small amusement. Because these concerns, which elicited much passionate discourse, were clearly lost on one of Conspiracy's neighbors out back. Conspiracy is located in Visayas Avenue, Quezon City, a commercial area. But the neighborhood at the back of Visayas Avenue is residential. Unfortunately for Conspiracy, it happened to be in proximity with a resident, or residents—a middle-aged couple—who did not share its view about the fabulous worth of its musical offerings. Indeed a couple who believed that people shouldn't have to pay to listen to these things, they have to be paid to do so. Despite Conspiracy's heroic efforts to insulate its sound, some of it apparently continued to escape through to their ears.

That was the reason patrons found a huge sign at Conspiracy last Tuesday night announcing that the place was being closed by order of City Hall. The neighbor, who apparently had some connections with City Hall, lodged a complaint, and City Hall ordered Conspiracy to cease and desist from spewing "noise pollution" (its term) into this planet. I am seriously suggesting that as the title for the next album of any of the artists involved with Conspiracy—"Noise Pollution." Isn't it a grand (or as Gary Granada says, *gara*) album title? Or title of a song?

Unfortunately, a couple of things were lined up last Tuesday at Conspiracy. They were the book launching of Charlson Ong's novel, "Banyaga: A Song of War," published by Anvil; and a session with Session Road. City Hall, with its tremendous talent for making life miserable for taxpayers, issued the closure order at 4:45 p.m. with an almost gleeful view to making an appeal next to impossible. Petty tyrants may be petty, but they are, oh, so tyrannical. Happily, the Conspiracy people—by dint of cajoling, badgering and pleading—were able to make the next-to-impossible possible, and were able to bargain at least for the continuation of the book launching. Happily, too, Karina Bolasco, by dint of racking up a minor fortune in cell phone bills, managed to assure all and sundry the event was pushing through. A crowd of the usual suspects, writers, artists and poseurs came through. They came late, but they came—and were game, singing themselves hoarse afterward. Now that, I grant, Conspiracy has to pay people to listen to.

The reason I am writing about all this is that for the strangest reason, the thing got blown out of proportion and landed on TV, radio and newspapers. I got to be interviewed a couple of times because my name kept cropping up as the owner of, or one of the partners in, Conspiracy. I've had to explain that though I am proud to be a "Conspirator," I am nowhere near to owning it. Nobody is. Conspiracy is the brainchild of Gary Granada who conspired with fellow singers Noel Cabangon, Bayang Barrios, Cynthia Alexander, Joey Ayala and Cooky Chua to put it up. They invited other people to join the conspiracy, and last I looked, some 150 people had done so—artists, NGO people, and plain lovers of music, however some might dispute the term. You can't own more than five shares, at P15,000 per. I claim the princely sum of two shares. The place itself is rich only in goodwill, creativity and talent.

I've had to explain two other things as well. One, it is not true that the place was shut down for political reasons. Surprisingly, that one rumor flew off faster than a speeding bullet, Conspiracy's attempt at mischievous humor finally catching up with itself. No, GMA had nothing to do with it, Conspiracy being engaged only in dark plots to ensnare more patrons to survive the horrible business climate today under her. Two, it is not true that the place has been operating without a business permit. The only reason it does not have one physically in its hands is that City Hall refuses to release it in light of its neighbor's complaint. But Conspiracy has been paying for that permit faithfully and on time.

In truth and in sum, the only reason Conspiracy was shut down last Tuesday was that a couple found the lush sounds Conspiracy was denying its garden patrons—sounds that were seeping in their direction—a diabolical distraction designed to disturb their disposition, and they lodged a protest against it. Happily, that has been settled, the closure lasting only 24 hours. An inspector from City Hall found the place to have reasonably complied with demands to mute its sound. Quite unhappily though, it may now offer only "acoustic music," effectively ruling out explorations in jazz and ethnic music, which are heavily percussive. But you never know, maybe, some music lover-cum-philanthropist out there might want to offer to soundproof the place completely (which is costly) and make everybody happy.

I have my own reason to be happy at the tempest in the teacup, for which I must thank its raiser, or the complainant, profusely. It's that I've just gotten all the ethical excuse I need to advertise Conspiracy shamelessly.

Korean invasion

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

BEFORE CLOSING MY FILES ON THE ASEAN AND East Asia Summits in Cebu City, a few more items must be stated. Many people never got to see the televised coverage of the Asean Gala Dinner cultural show that was superbly produced and directed by Lupita Aquino Kashiwahara. Readers are requesting that this star-studded extravaganza, a marvel in precision-timing, be re-shown over NBN-4. Few know that the show's surprise emcee, with that pleasant American-Asian accent, was none other than San Francisco-based journalist Ken Kashiwahara, better known here as Lupita's husband.

By the way, did you know that when the Cebu Summit was postponed last December, the Mactan Shangri-La had already stocked up with nine tons of foodstuffs? Some of those couldn't be put to good use anymore, but the hotel was kind enough not to charge the government a cent for it.

* * *

The Asean leaders gladly awaited the finish of the crucial and historic meeting between the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea, which was held in a small cottage specially constructed by the Philippine government right by the beach at Mactan Shangri-La Resort Hotel. And they had good reason to wait.

* * *

Over the past many years, it had been customary for the heads of state of these three Northeast Asian countries to meet and they've had seven meetings so far. But in the past three years, no such meeting had taken place, as relations between China and South Korea on one hand, and Japan on the other, had become strained over the visits of former Japanese PM Koichiro Koizumi to the Yashukuni war memorial in downtown Tokyo—which the two other former occupied countries had resented. At Mactan, for the first time in three years, Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Wen Jiabao and President Roh Moo-hyun closeted themselves with just their translators for about an hour, while their aides and ambassadors huddled in the next room. Korean Ambassador Hong Jong-ki later told this columnist that the leaders tackled the North Korean nuclear issue, the flow of trade and other economic issues in the region, and the possible impact of sandstorms from the northern part of China on the environment. The summit was said to have gone amicably, doubtless helped by the holiday mood in Mactan.

* * *

Speaker Jose de Venecia played host last week to his counterpart, Speaker Lim Chae Jung of the Republic of Korea's National Assembly, whose entourage included, aside from Mme. Lim, MP Chung Eui-yong, who chairs the foreign relations committee of the ruling Uri Party of SK. JDV and wife Gina tendered a dinner for the VIPs last Thursday, and over the weekend, they invited them over to his fisheries project in Dagupan City, where he scientifically breeds many high-value fish. Over a seafood picnic at JDV's fishpond, Lim announced a donation of $2 million for a center for bangus production and research to be built in Dagupan, which is famous for its bangus Bonoan. JDV was all smiles as the gift would be a boon to his city in this election year.

Speaker Lim has a colorful political background. As a distinguished journalist for 10 years, he was thrice put in prison during the military dictatorship in Korea; upon his release, he entered politics and helped set Korea on the road to democracy, together with another political prisoner named Kim Dae Jung, who subsequently became President.

* * *

I learned that the Koreans are investing some $2 billion in soft equity investments, of which $1 billion will go to setting up the Hanjin ship-building facilities in Subic, and three power plants are being put up by Kepco in Rizal, Naga in Cebu and Lian in Batangas. JDV is persuading the Koreans to channel the excess power from these facilities to develop an agro-industrial park in Oriental Mindoro.

Korean tourists now outnumber other Asian tourists here, and Korean Ambassador Hong Jong-ki pointed out that an estimated 70,000 Koreans are living in the Philippines, although the number may be closer to 100,000. Many of them study in RP schools, with emphasis in English, but Bulacan 3rd District Rep. Lorna Silverio points out that young Koreans are now coming to San Rafael in her district, to learn how to play golf at the Royal Northwoods Golf Club there.

* * *

Actually, JDV was merely returning Lim's hospitality. Last September, Lim's Uri Party pulled out all stops to make the 4th International Conference on Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) that it hosted in Seoul a roaring success. JDV founded ICAPP in May 2000 when he was a private citizen; he now chairs its standing committee. ICAPP has grown from a handful of political parties six years ago, to 40 in its second confab in Bangkok, to 75 in Beijing, and then 92 in Seoul in 2006. JDV has proposed to the SK Speaker to allow MP Chung Eui-Yong to be JDV's co-chair in the ICAPP standing committee. One issue they're expected to push hard for is the financial support of various Asian governments to legitimate political parties. JDV, who recently filed a bill seeking such government funding for RP political parties, explains that European and American governments have long been funding the political campaigns of major parties. He said this practice helps reduce corruption, since winners won't feel obliged to pay back supporters who could be drug and gambling lords or big business.

* * *

A few days ago, there was talk that newly retired Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban was running for senator under the opposition slate. I called him up and he denied it with a big laugh. He stressed that he has no intention of running for any position whatsoever, and that he intends to spend the rest of his retirement with his family, and that he and wife Lenny intend to intensify their "apostolate," i.e., to take care of and enjoy their grandchildren whenever they can.

A Christmas shooting

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

A GOOD FRIEND CALLED ME UP DURING THE holidays with a story so horrific I found it difficult to believe, and yet, not too uncommon that I can't say I've never heard the story—or similar ones—before.

I promised to call friends of mine in the Philippine National Police to see what could be done about going after the perpetrator, but first I said I would need more details on the case. I never heard from my friend again, but I did find this article on my e-mail box recently.

I have the permission of the author, Haydee Ann Montoya, to reprint her account, and am doing so now in hopes of calling the attention of the police in Maguindanao, as well as of the social and religious leaders of the Muslim community, to ensure that justice is done to Haydee's sister and her daughters.

It's said that the Philippines does not lack for very good laws but that the good intentions of their framers are frustrated, if not negated entirely, by spotty implementation. There's also the matter of social mores and traditions getting in the way of the proper implementation of our laws, with community pressure—as well as indifference—thwarting the course of justice and of just plain human compassion.

Haydee titled her piece "Justice amid uncertainties." Will justice prevail amid the uncertainty of an inhospitable social environment, and in the face of perceived influence and power of the perpetrator's family? Let's see how this unfolding story plays out.

Here's the first part of Haydee's article, with the concluding portion coming out tomorrow. Curiously, despite the sensational nature of the crime, I haven't encountered any news report about it on TV or the newspapers. I guess Haydee has good reason to fear about the case's outcome.

* * *

THE SEVEN deadly sins—Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony, Lust. Jealousy could pass for the eighth.

On the night of Dec. 21, 2006, my sister's husband indiscriminately fired a gun at her and his daughters. This incident started with a text message from an unregistered number in my sister's mobile phone that said "gudnyt heart" a few minutes after the couple arrived together from a Christmas party of their children and of my sister's office. My sister attempted to delete the message from this unknown person but my brother-in-law swiped away the phone and answered the message with "wer r u now?" The person answered "still here heart. Bye for now because your guard is there." This resulted in a heated argument, a physical struggle and the subsequent firing of a gun, which was aimed at the ground. My brother-in-law later aimed the gun in the direction of my sister and their daughters. Everything else followed, all because of jealousy.

The police came only after all the victims were rushed to the hospital.

My sister survived a bullet that went through her hipbone and badly damaged her intestines. She had to undergo an emergency colostomy and she will be undergoing another operation in a few months to bring her body back to normal. Doctors were also able to detect two bullets in her leg. One daughter had to undergo an operation due to a bullet that hit her right hand and damaged a tendon. Another daughter died two days after the incident due to a bullet that went through her head.

* * *

IT WAS a terrible and tragic incident. All our plans of getting together in my parents' house for Christmas and New Year were abandoned. We made the hospital our temporary home. While people were happily and comfortably celebrating in their homes, we were in the hospital comforting each other and caring for my weak sister and injured niece. Yes, we went through everything there in love and anguish. We celebrated Christmas, my parents' 39th wedding anniversary, my brother's birthday and New Year at their bedsides. My sister's two other children were not with us because they are in the custody of their father's kin. We mourned my niece's death. We never got to view her body as she was taken by my brother-in-law's family immediately after she died and was buried in Islamic rites.

As if this was not enough punishment, my brother-in-law started to tell people that his motive for shooting my sister was the presence of a third party and that he caught sight of her in a motorcycle with another man. We all know that there was no such scene. Even my brother-in-law knows that this is just a figment of his imagination. My sister cannot move freely without her in-laws' knowledge. Her brother-in-law closely monitors her daily activities. I did not pay much attention to this until I learned that this lie had been circulating in workplaces of my professional circles. I was forced to send letters to my e-groups to render justice to my sister who is now twice a victim, first of domestic violence and second, of gossip and lies.

* * *

WE do not believe that my sister was having an affair. She's a God-fearing person. She barely has time for such activities since she is very busy earning for their four children. Her husband was jobless for four years and was employed on a contractual basis for only three months before this incident.

This is clearly a case of parricide, frustrated parricide and physical injury. One bullet can be considered an accidental firing, but more than that, never. The involvement of an imaginary third party is immaterial—nothing could ever give anyone the right to fire a gun at his own family.

It's been more than a month since the shooting. A warrant of arrest has not been issued yet. Yes, I am very disappointed with the kind of justice and responses we have received. It's always easy to apprehend a person who stole an egg from a store but concerned authorities will never get close to a killer. I'm too exasperated by this. I'm mad, confused, hurt.

Counting Iraqi casualties

WORLD VIEW

Beth Osborne Daponte

IN TIMES OF WAR, ACCURATE FIGURES ON THE civilian death toll are almost always hard to come by. With few exceptions, demographers and epidemiologists have not applied their expertise to making rigorous, credible estimates of civilian mortality and morbidity. Sometimes, a lack of professional freedom prevents those who may be most familiar with the data—for example, analysts whose livelihoods depend on the government(s) involved in the conflict—from using their expertise for purposes that could be politically damaging.

But there are other challenges as well. Isolating the conflict's impact from that of other interventions (e.g., economic sanctions) may be impossible. Moreover, the high-quality population data needed for credible estimates may not be available due to their "sensitive nature," or because they never have been collected (sometimes, the case in developing nations), or because refugee movements have made data obsolete. As a result, the degree of uncertainty in such estimates may be unacceptably high, making them of little real worth.

Consider the different approaches that have been used to examine the Iraq war. The Iraq Body Count aims to tally only deaths from violence during the current war by creating a data set based on media reports. If there is no double counting, and if the incidents included in the data were reported correctly, their tally represents a minimum number, because media reports may not be comprehensive.

Another approach estimates the total change in mortality that the war caused (including deaths due to the war's direct and indirect effects) by calculating the change in the death rate from the pre-war period. This requires data upon which to base the rise in mortality—usually derived by conducting a household survey on a random sample of the population. Typically, interviewers ask the head of the household to disclose the number and demographic characteristics of pre-war household members, whether any of the people in the pre-war household had died between the pre-war period and the time of the survey, and the date of any household member's death.

If household surveys are carried out properly, the number of excess deaths during the war can be estimated within a range of statistical uncertainty. But, when conducted during wartime, risks abound. Aside from the risks to interviewers collecting such data during a conflict, these include the selection bias of households in the sample, a lack of credible population data to which to apply the changed mortality rates, and mistaken or misleading accounts by participants.

The survey approach was used twice by a group of researchers based primarily at Johns Hopkins University, who published their results in the medical journal The Lancet. Their estimates have been lauded, but also questioned because of their misinterpretation of their own figures.

For example, in a summary of the 2004 study, they wrote, "Making conservative assumptions, we think that about 100,000 excess deaths, or more, have happened since the 2003 invasion of Iraq." But the first study yielded very imprecise estimates of the number of deaths, which the authors glossed over. They should have said, "We can say with 95 percent certainty that between 8,000 and 194,000 excess Iraqi deaths occurred during the period."

The group essentially repeated the study in 2006, using a larger sample size. Again, the researchers had interviewers administer what resembled a typical survey of a random sample of households. Appropriately, at the end of the article in The Lancet, the authors discuss issues that may have resulted in a sample that in fact did not meet the "random" threshold.

Problems with interpretation also plagued that second effort. The authors used crude death rates (CDRs), which reflect the number of deaths per thousand people, in explaining the rise in mortality. But demographers rarely use the CDRs, thinking instead in terms of age- and sex-specific mortality rates, usually summarized as "life expectancy." That being said, the group reported that the CDRs increased from 5.5 per thousand people in 2002 to 13.3 per thousand in the post-invasion period (March 2003-March 2006).

To put the pre-invasion figure in perspective, consider the United Nations Population Division's figures, which are generally considered to be of very high quality. The UN estimates that Iraq's pre-invasion CDR was 10 per thousand, not the 5 per thousand estimated from the two studies. Comparing internationally, the UN reports that Iran's CDR in the 2000-2005 period was 5.3 per thousand. Prior to the war, most observers thought that the situation in Iraq was considerably worse than in Iran.

So the pre-war CDR that the two Lancet studies yield seems too low. It may not be wrong, but the authors should provide a credible explanation of why their pre-war CDR is nearly half that of the UN Population Division. If the pre-war mortality rate was too low and/or if the population estimates were too high—because, for example, they ignored outflows of refugees from Iraq—the resulting estimates of the number of Iraqi "excess deaths" would be inflated.

More fundamentally, what purpose do these numbers serve? Certainly, after the dust has settled, numbers may help in evaluating the costs and benefits (if any) of a war. But in real time, do the numbers really add to the debate? Do they really provide us with more information than the Iraq Body Count figures provide? Do we have the appropriate context to help us interpret the numbers? The war in Iraq has been exceptionally bloody. For now, that is about all that the statistics can safely tell us.

Project Syndicate

Beth Osborne Daponte is a senior research scholar at Yale University's Institution for Social and Policy Studies.

Old children

YOUNG BLOOD

Georgina B. Angsanto

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

A MAN I HIGHLY RESPECT ONCE TOLD ME THAT LIFE IS short, that the problems I am facing now will pass, and that if there are things that I want to do, I better make the most of today and just get up and do it. I understand the merits of this advice and, deep in my heart, I believe in it.

But I cannot seem to absorb this life's lesson. It could be because it is a lesson that I might just have to learn on my own.

Had we been a more intelligent race, this might not be. But an infant will still suck a thumb and drool all over the crib. A toddler will still scrape a knee. A teenager will still lose sleep over acne and puppy love. And a student will still cut classes. Maturity, you see, cannot be rushed. It is not just learned and understood. It is experienced.

Much has been written and told about how those who are older, those who have experienced and learned more in life, bear the responsibility of inspiring and educating the younger generations. But let this be a piece that echoes the views from the other side. Maybe, children have the right to be children. And maybe, we all should be given the right to make mistakes and learn from them.

The generation gap phenomenon is often explained as the inability of an older generation and a younger generation to relate with each other. There are two reasons such a gap exists. On the part of the younger, they are often too consumed with themselves and with their MTV to bother about understanding the purpose and meaning of their existence. But the older generation is not without a part here. Perhaps, they are too aloof and confident of their maturity that they, as grownups, have forgotten what it is like to grow up.

Sometimes, adults feel as though they have done it all and learned it all. For them, the problems of the teenager are obstacles they have overcome; the trials of a first crush and the first heartbreak are eventually regarded as just part of growing up—as though growing up has become a done deal, passé and a trivial concern. The problems of the youth are now just childish concerns that will pass. And with this sense of age and maturity comes a sense of superiority. Everyone who is younger and lesser in experience becomes below them.

Most adults have forgotten how it is like to grow up. They have forgotten how difficult it is to be so concerned about what other people think of you. They have forgotten how it is to value the present because the future is so far away. Now, they think about virtue and honor and legacy. They have forgotten that everything began as a struggle to gain self-confidence and peer acceptance, and to have fun. It becomes worse when adults begin to belittle the experiences of the young.

"You're too young to understand." "When you grow up, you will get it." "Wait until you have your own children, and then you'll understand where I am coming from."

In my perspective, there is no such thing as too young to understand, only too old to explain, too mature to bend down to and speak the language understandable to the next generation; too proud to consider the issues of "teenhood" as legitimate and as consequential as the perils of the real world.

When you say "real world," is that to imply that the youth lives in an "unreal" world?

The youth have their own world indeed. But it is as real as that of the adults'. Except that "reality" is defined, interpreted and understood from two different perspectives.

Parents should understand that if they want to bridge the generation gap, they have to get down from their high mounts and understand how strongly the youth feel about their concerns. Parents should not be too "mature" as to alienate themselves from their children. And they should not expect their children to mature before they are ready.

When you hear Eminem "rap-cussing," do not roll up your eyes and conclude that your child is just undergoing an "age of rebellion," one that he will soon outgrow. Understand that this phase is not something that will be outgrown. It is part and parcel of what will contribute to the development of a human being. In other words, do not belittle as inconsequential the lives of those who are less experienced than you.

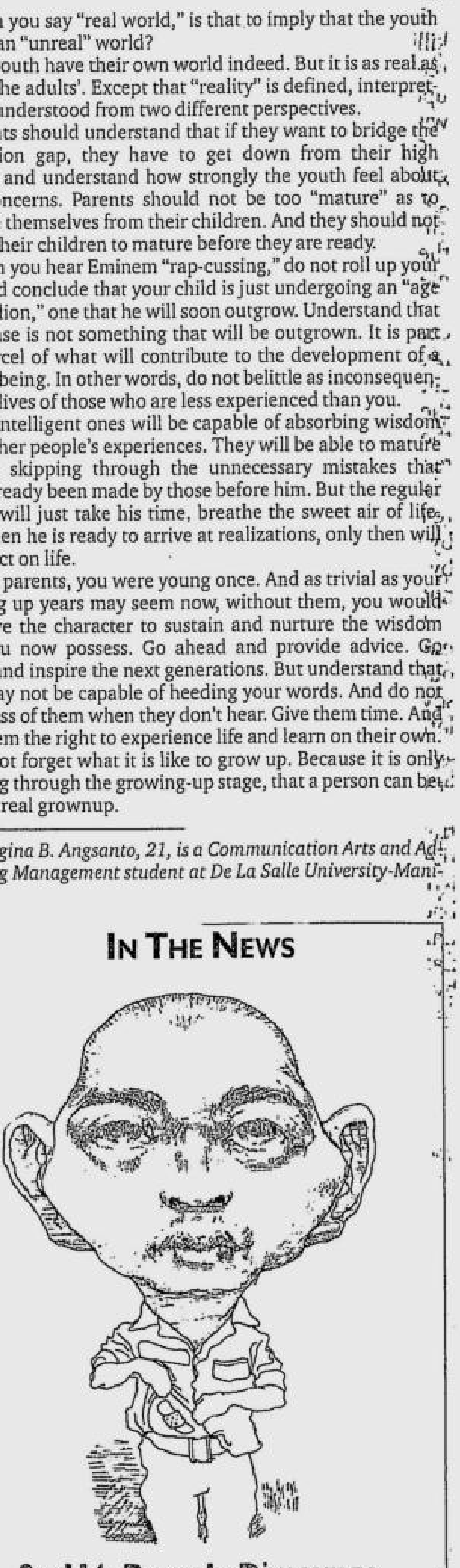
The intelligent ones will be capable of absorbing wisdom from other people's experiences. They will be able to mature quickly, skipping through the unnecessary mistakes that have already been made by those before him. But the regular person will just take his time, breathe the sweet air of life. And when he is ready to arrive at realizations, only then will he reflect on life.

Dear parents, you were young once. And as trivial as your growing up years may seem now, without them, you would not have the character to sustain and nurture the wisdom that you now possess. Go ahead and provide advice. Go ahead and inspire the next generations. But understand that they may not be capable of heeding your words. And do not think less of them when they don't hear. Give them time. And give them the right to experience life and learn on their own.

Do not forget what it is like to grow up. Because it is only by going through the growing-up stage, that a person can become a real grownup.

Georgina B. Angsanto, 21, is a Communication Arts and Advertising Management student at De La Salle University-Manila.

IN THE NEWS



2nd Lt. Romulo Dimayuga

POWER SECTOR
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

For the

SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF OFFICE FURNISHINGS, AUDIO/VIDEO EQUIPMENT AND AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEMS FOR PSALM OFFICE AT SEVENTH FLOOR BANKMER BUILDING, MAKATI CITY

1. The PSALM, through its 2007 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of THREE MILLION EIGHT HUNDRED TWENTY SEVEN THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED SEVEN PESOS AND 31/100 (PHP 3,827,107.31) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the above project. Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PROCURING ENTITY now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for

Schedule	Description	Qty.	Units	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
I	Supply, Delivery, Installation and Commissioning of Air-conditioning System	1	Lot	Php 498,009.12 Inclusive of RVAT
II	Supply, Delivery and Installation of Office Furnishings	1	Lot	Php 3,329,098.19 Inclusive of RVAT
	Total			Php 3,827,107.31

at SEVENTH FLOOR BANKMER BUILDING, AYALA AVENUE, MAKATI CITY. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to R.A. 5183. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) PER SCHEDULE shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) PER SCHEDULE who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PROCURING ENTITY and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9:00AM-5:00PM.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS ONLY (Php2,500.00), either in cash or check. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PROCURING ENTITY will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 09 February 2007 at 2:00PM at the 6/F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 19 February 2007 at 2:00PM. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of cash, cashier's check, irrevocable letter of credit (1% of the ABC), bank guarantee (1 ½% of ABC) or surety bond (2 ½% of the ABC). Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on 19 February 2007 at 2:15PM at the 6/F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend
9. The PROCURING ENTITY reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)
ATTY. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
6/F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Tel: 893-8202 ; Fax: 840-3896
e-mail: *hctolentino@psalm.gov.ph*

(Sgd.) ATTY. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
Chairperson, BAC

(PDI–Jan. 30, 2007)

POWER SECTOR
ASSETS & LIABILITIES
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

For the

SUPPLY, DELIVERY, INSTALLATION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING OF AIRCONDITIONING SYSTEMS AT PSALM OFFICE, 3F TRANSCO POWER TRAINING CENTER, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY

1. The PSALM, through its 2007 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of TWO HUNDRED NINETY THOUSAND PESOS ONLY (Php290,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the above project. Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PROCURING ENTITY now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for

Description	Qty.	Units	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT
Air-conditioning System	1	Lot	Php290,000.00 inclusive of RVAT

AT PSALM OFFICE, THIRD FLOOR, TRANSCO POWER TRAINING CENTER, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of R.A. 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to R.A. 5183. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PROCURING ENTITY and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9:00AM-5:00PM.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of FIVE HUNDRED PESOS ONLY (Php500.00), either in cash or check. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PROCURING ENTITY will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on 09 February 2007 at 10:00AM at the 6/F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before 19 February 2007 at 10:00AM. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of cash or, irrevocable letter of credit (1% of the ABC) Bank Guarantee (1 ½% of the ABC) or Surety Bond (2 ½% of the ABC). Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on 19 February 2007 at 10:15AM at the 6/F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. The PROCURING ENTITY reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation
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ATTY. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
6/F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Tel: (02) 893-8202; Fax: (02) 840-3896
e-mail: *hctolentino@psalm.gov.ph*

(Sgd.) Atty. HELENA C. TOLENTINO
Chairperson, BAC

(PDI- Jan 30 2007)

No longer a gov't of the people

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER LETTERS

WHEN THE GOVERNMENT NO longer acts for the people, it ceases to be "a government of the people, for the people and by the people."

In the way it handled the issue of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith's custody, the Philippine government, specifically, the executive branch, showed us that the interest of the nation is not its primary concern.

The executive department—from President Macapagal-Arroyo, down to Secretary Raul Gonzalez and Secretary Ronaldo Puno, to Presidential Counsel Sergio Apostol and Solicitor General Eduardo Nachura (accordingly all bright boys and legal luminaries)—allowed Smith, despite his conviction, to be freed from Philippine custody and transferred to the US Embassy in the dead of night, without a court order.

What they did was reprehensible, a betrayal of the people's trust. What is particularly disturbing to us was the participation of Apostol and Nachura, both from the Eastern Visayas. It should be noted that the town of Balangiga in Eastern Samar, with the region's support, has been asking for the return of church bells which were taken as war booties by American occupation forces, during the Philippine-American War. For "a few dollars more" from Uncle Sam, the two joined the conspiracy to dump Philippine sovereignty. It is said that the true measure of a man is dignity and courage. It is sad that in these times when we need exemplars of these values, people in power chose to abandon those values.

By disregarding Smith's conviction by a court, the Arroyo administration acted like a father turning his back on a daughter who is being attacked by a pack of wolves. It is highly doubtful now that our court can implement a final and executory judgment of conviction.

Naturally, the Court of Appeals had to rule that the custody issue had become "moot and academic." This was the only way out for the appeals court—after all, Smith was already in the hands of the US government.

Besides, a contrary decision would have been unwise: no one antagonizes the power that fills the vacancies in the Supreme Court.

Ultimately, the Smith case will be remembered for the way the Arroyo regime bamboozled the Filipino nation just to please the United States. To the international community, this case is yet another manifestation of the Philippine government's subservience to America, so much so that it will sell the Filipino people to endear itself to Uncle Sam. Yes, to stay in power, GMA will have no qualms about riding all tigers—the Philippine National Police, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and now the United States.

The 2007 elections are coming fast and only the people of the Philippines can stop her from further abusing the Filipino people. If the coming elections fail, the people will be forced to do what they need to do to assert their rights. And this could lead to chaos. But in the end, the good will triumph over evil for such is the natural order of the Divine Law. God bless our country!

—MARCIAL DEL PILAR,
Manila

GSIS pensioner still waiting for Xmas bonus and pension

MY WIFE IS A GOVERNMENT REtiree and pensioner who served in the Philippine foreign service for 46 years. She had been receiving her pension and Christmas bonus regularly through the Philippine National Bank—that is, until December 2006.

Recently, the Government Service Insurance System decided to introduce the GSIS e-Card Plus. With this new system, the disbursement of GSIS pensions will be done by ATM, no longer by checks. It took almost a whole day to obtain her new card; but this had to be discarded because our last name was misspelled.

GSIS president and general manager Winston Garcia takes pride in having introduced "efficiency," "modernization," "a giant leap ... for many pensioners."

We are wary of the vaunted "efficiency" of the new e-Card Plus system because when my wife used her card on Jan. 2, 2007, a holiday, we found out that there were no funds in her account. The next day, an officer of the bank confirmed that the account was indeed empty. In fact, he said, it will remain empty until February 2007.

My wife and I will thank Garcia if he makes good his promise by seeing to it that my wife's 2006 Christmas bonus and January 2007 pension are delivered to her posthaste.

—NICASIO G. VALDERRAMA,
2 Scouter Ojeda St., Barangay
Paligsahan, Quezon City 1103

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
WITH MAGIC TRAVEL & TOURS, INC. 1505 Echelon Tower, 2021 A. Mabini St., Malate, Manila	Songju Park	Supervisor
STANDARD CHARTERED BANK 6788 Ayala Ave., San Lorenzo Village, Makati City	Na Steven Suryana	VC-General Manager, Wealth Management
WITH MAGIC TRAVEL & TOURS AGENCY, INC. 1505 Echelon Tower, 2021 A. Mabini St., Malate, Manila	Sung Soo Choi	President
JOHNSONDIVERSEY PHILIPPINES, INC. 26/F BPI Buendia Center, Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Himanshu Jain	Managing Director
UCB PHILIPPINES, INC. 9/F Salcedo Tower, 169 H.V. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Girdhar Prem Balwani	President
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES INC. U-5302 PBCom Tower, Ayala Ave., cor. Rufino St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Yu Jiang	Turnkey Network Planning and Design Engineer
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES INC. U-5302 PBCom Tower, Ayala Ave., cor. Rufino St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Wei Yuan	Sales Management Director
CECILIA & CLAIR ENTERPRISE CORPORATION 1254 Bambang St., Tondo, Manila	Pei-Lin Weng	Treasurer and Quality Assurance Director
HUAWEI TECHNOLOGIES PHILIPPINES INC. U-5302 PBCom Tower, Ayala Ave., cor. Rufino St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Sujie Zhang	Sales Management and Administration Director
S2K EQUIPMENT TRADING CORPORATION 3033 F. Bautista St., Ugong, Valenzuela City	Seogho Cha	General Manager
SYKES ASIA INC. 26F Robinson's Summit Bldg., 6783 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Keon Ju Lee	Korean Client Support
FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, INC. 16/F, Citibank Tower, Valero St. Salcedo Village, Makati City	James Alexander Lochead	Regional Manager-Business Development and Support
HANKOOK HANYANG MANPOWER AGENCY CORPORATION B3 L1, Red St. cor. Rainbow Drive, Goodwill 2, Sucat, Paranaque City	Seon Yoo Kim	Personnel Supervisor
HAN KOOK RESTAURANT 1879 M.H. Del Pilar St., Malate, Manila	Jae Keun Chung	Operations Manager

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI–Jan. 30, 2007)

An oil price question

IT'S BEEN WEEKS SINCE THE PRICE OF OIL slid to a 19-month low but, unfortunately, it's still the usual snail-paced "rollback" being implemented.

Unlike when the prices of oil go up in the world market, the corresponding adjustments are immediately made effective regardless of the inventory, while under recoveries are computed up to the last drop.

So, guess who is at the losing end?

—RENATO L. OCAMPO,
125 Stanford St.,
Cubao, Quezon City

DILG violated due process in 'Iloilo raid'

THE GOVERNORS OF REGION 6-WESTERN Visayas most strongly express and manifest our support for our colleague, Gov. Niel Tupas of Iloilo, who now faces a dismissal order from the Ombudsman. The order is being enforced and implemented by the Department of Interior and Local Government;

As the local chief executive of a premiere province which is a major and key player in the economic and tourism development of Region 6, Governor Tupas has been very cooperative and supportive of the programs of the national government through the Regional Development Council (RDC). The hasty and harsh decision to dismiss him greatly disturbs and alarms us since, apparently, the manner by which the dismissal order was enforced did not allow him the opportunity and right to seek the remedies and reliefs afforded to him by our Constitution and laws. The governor was denied the constitutional guarantees of due process and of the full and equal protection of the law. Governor Tupas is extremely a popular and well-respected leader of the province.

We strongly feel that what was done to him will surely undermine the confidence of the people of Iloilo and Region 6 in the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has been trying to unite our divided nation.

In this light, we, the governors of Region 6, strongly call for due process to be observed in the enforcement of the order dismissing Governor Tupas, if only to safeguard not just his right as a citizen but also his being an elected official of the province of Iloilo, who is sworn to serve and protect the interests of his constituents under a regime that adheres to the rule of law.

—VICENTE B. BERMEJO, governor, Capiz;
JOSEPH G. MARAÑON, governor,
Negros Occidental; CARLITO S. MARQUEZ,
governor, Aklan; JOAQUIN CARLOS A. NAVA,
governor, Guimaras; SALVACION Z. PEREZ,
governor, Antique

An insane government

BELINDA OLIVARES-CUNANAN RECOMmended the abolition of the Senate because, according to her, those wanting to succeed the incumbent senators or to join them in that body are their close relatives—siblings and sons, among others. This is insanity, Cunanan said. (PDI, 1/20/07) If public offices should be abolished on that ground, no government branch will be left standing.

The fact is, many members of the House of Representatives are also suffering from the same insanity? And this insanity has more manifestations in all levels of local government—at the provincial, city, municipality and barangay levels.

Following Cunanan's logic, the government is indeed becoming "insane."

—BAGANI LIBOT,
libot_bagani@yahoo.com

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Across the NATION

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Guns fall silent in besieged villages

COTABATO CITY—THE SEPARATIST MORO ISlamic Liberation Front has agreed to end hostilities in a North Cotabato town that has killed five people and threatened to cut short efforts to bring the rebels and the government to a peace agreement.

Brig. Gen. Eduardo Gurrea, chief of the government's coordinating committee on the cessation of hostilities, said the International Monitoring Team (IMT) agreed to send peacekeeping forces to the site of the clashes.

The Malaysia-led IMT, which monitors a ceasefire agreement between the MILF and the government, also agreed to set up a ceasefire monitoring assistance team to prevent future clashes.

Three rebels and three militiamen were killed and as many as 2,000 families were displaced in the fighting.

The team is composed of two representatives each from the IMT, government and the MILF, Gurrea said.

He urged other civil society groups to volunteer to become part of the team.

The MILF said it would "reposition" its forces away from the farming village of Rangaban and Mudseng. The military, it said, had also agreed to pull out.

The fighting occurred after MILF rebels raided rice farms and attacked soldiers who came to protect the residents on Jan. 25.

Fr. Bert Layson, a peace advocate involved in the rehabilitation of war-torn areas in North Cotabato, said at least 6,000 people had been displaced by the fighting.

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF chief negotiator, blamed the Army's 6th Infantry Division for the aerial assaults.

Iqbal said his counterpart, government chief negotiator Silvestre Afable, informed him that AFP chief of staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon ordered the Army to stand down.

Lt. Col. Julieto Ando, 6th Infantry Division spokesperson, said government forces flew planes but didn't drop bombs.

Residents, however, wanted the government to prosecute the guerrillas who launched the attacks.

Residents interviewed by INQUIRER identified Commanders Samal Masgal, Orich and Garduque Lantion as the ones responsible for the fighting.

Residents said Lantion, the elected village chair of Rangaban, had fled and joined MILF ranks after he was charged with a criminal offense.

On several occasions, Lantion led MILF fighters in harassing his own village, especially during harvest season.

"It's not about land, it's plain and simple banditry," said Midsayap Vice Mayor Manuel Rabara.

Local officials have asked the MILF to turn in to local police the three commanders who led the attack on Thursday.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said any guerrilla involved in crimes would be turned over to the government negotiating panel as provided for by the ceasefire agreement. *Jeoffrey Maitem and Edwin Fernandez, Inquirer Mindanao*

Shipping firm faces charges for coral reef destruction

By Romy Amarado
Inquirer Visayas

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE CITY government will file a damage suit against a shipping company after one of its vessels ran aground in a marine sanctuary in Barangay Banilad on Jan. 22.

Vice Mayor William Ablong said the MV Jake Vincent, of Villa Shipping Lines, ran aground inside the 6.5-hectare marine sanctuary, off the coast of Ihalason Beach.

An ordinance authored by Ablong established the sanctuary in 2001.

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) said the Jake Vincent came from the Subic Bay Freeport, carrying some 21,000 bags of animal feed consigned to New Bian Yek Commercial here.

The cargo was to be unloaded at a private port in the neighboring town of Bacong.

A PCG report said the MV Anastacia, a vessel owned by July Lighterage Corp. in Dumaguete, also ran aground in the sanctuary, when it tried to tow the Jake Vincent away from the area, also on Jan. 22.

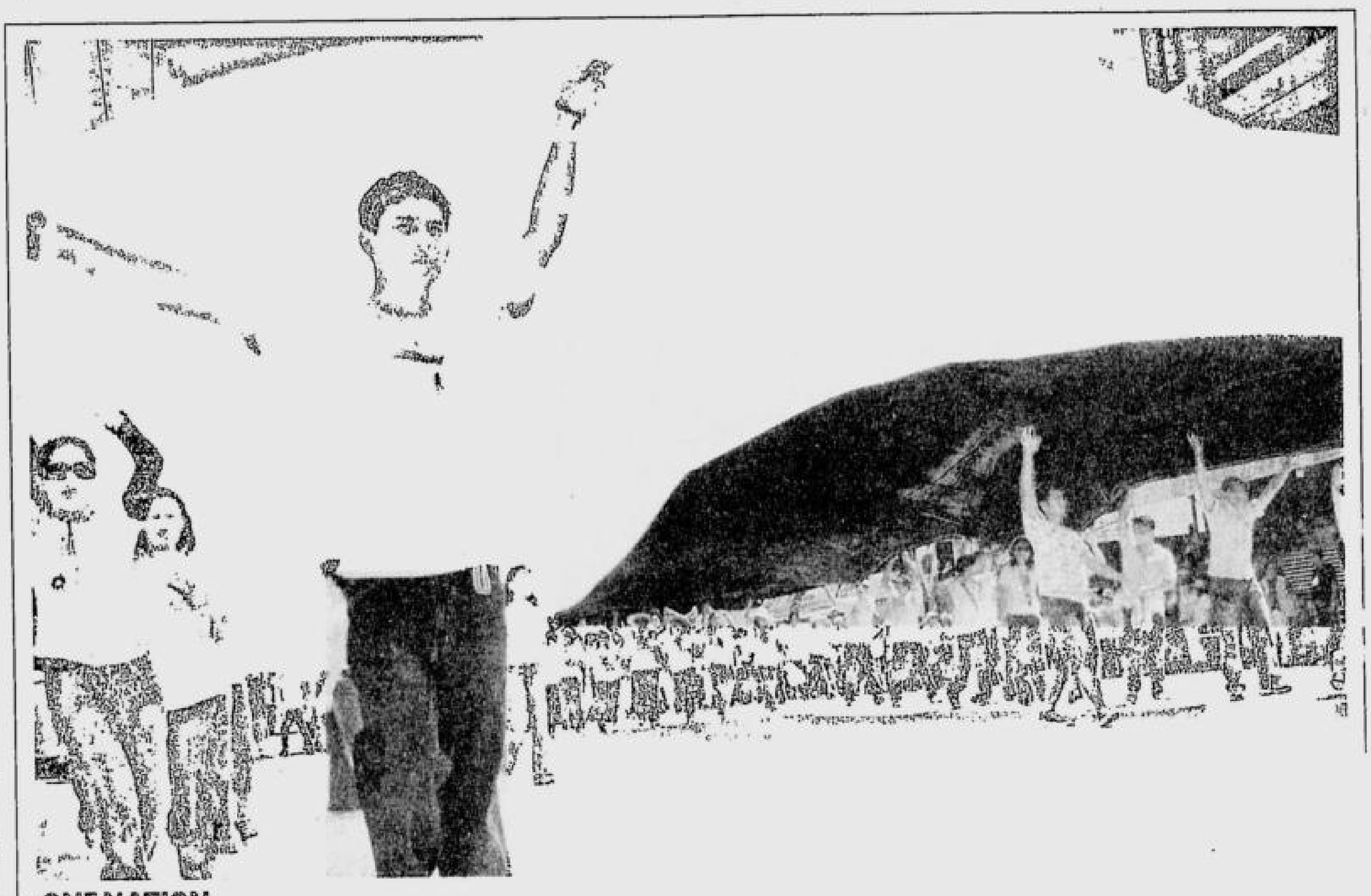
Another vessel of Villa Shipping Lines, the MV Euro 1, extracted the two vessels.

The extent of damage is undetermined since the Silliman University Marine Laboratory (SUML) has yet to complete an investigation.

The SUML would submit its report to the city council.

"As soon as the SUML renders its report, we will immediately file charges against the owner of the Jake Vincent," Ablong said.

Ablong, a staunch environmentalist, said lawyers Michael Lee Maxino and Manuel Arbon have offered their legal services to the city for free, should the case push through.



ONE NATION
Performers representing the nine tribes of Panay Island hold a giant Philippine flag as they parade in Iloilo City to celebrate the Dinagyang Festival, the city's version of the world-renowned Ati-Atihan.

John Hay finds new investor, says mayor

BAGUIO CITY—CAMP JOHN Hay has found a new investor, which could help save the cash-strapped tourism project being developed by real estate giant Fil Estate, acting Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. said.

Bautista said the Fil Estate-owned Camp John Hay Development Corp. (CJHDevco) owed the government over P1 billion but it managed to win a P2-billion investment package from an unidentified new partner.

CJHDevco officials declined to comment, although sources said a deal was indeed being worked out to increase the project's capitalization.

Bautista said the information was relayed to him following a meeting he had with Narciso Abaya, president of the Bases Conversion Development Authority (BCDA).

He said the information should help the city government delay the forfeiture of the Baguio Convention Center.

The city government bought the facility for P250 million from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) in 2002, by mortgaging the city's share from the John Hay rent.

The BCDA advanced P50 million to cement the purchase of the convention center, which then First Lady Imelda Marcos ordered built to host the 1978 world chess match between grandmasters Anatoli Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi.

But the BCDA told Bautista it was unable to release the first installments of the remaining P200-million balance because CJHDevco had not paid its rent.

The mayor is meeting separately with Winston Garcia, GSIS president, to solve the crisis over the facility's repossession.

Fil Estate Chair Robert John Sobrepeña, who is also CJHDevco chair, suspended rent payments when the Supreme Court affirmed in 2005 a ruling that nullified John Hay's tax exemptions.

CJHDevco had negotiated a new scheme to cover arrears going back to 1999 when the high court issued the decision.

"[Abaya] told me the BCDA could not advance anymore money because it could not dip into the revenues of the Subic Bay Freeport or the Clark Special Economic Zone to pay for the debts of the John Hay Special Economic Zone," Bautista said.

He said the BCDA was waiting for Congress to schedule a bicameral conference committee meeting to merge the two bills that would restore John Hay's benefits. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

32 villagers tagged missing found in port 'OK and alive'

By Julie Alipala
Inquirer Mindanao

ZAMBOANGA CITY—THE 32 persons who have been reported missing since Jan. 25 in the seas of Luuk, Sulu, were found at the port of Siasi town on Sunday.

Jose Manuel Mamauag, director of the Commission of Human Rights in Western Mindanao, told the INQUIRER that 28 adults and four children were found at the Siasi Port and immediately brought to Tongkil Island.

Mamauag said he got the report from Jolo Councilor Temojen Tulawie, a member of the Civil Society Group in Sulu that documents human rights abuses on the island.

OK and alive

Tulawie confirmed the report to the INQUIRER and said he was on his way to Tongkil to know from the victims why there were reports that they were held by Philippine Navy personnel.

"They are all OK and alive," he said.

The Western Mindanao Command also confirmed the recovery of the missing persons.

Maj. Eugene Batara, spokesperson of the regional Command, said one of the two pump boats that the victims were riding in ran out of gas. "That's why they were floating at sea for three days," he said.

Batara denied reports that the victims were held by Navy personnel.

Commodore Geronimo Defensor, commander of the Naval Forces Western Mindanao, earlier denied allegations that a Navy gunboat took the victims.

Batara earlier said the 2nd Marine Brigade received a report from Kalingalang Caluang Councilor Hadji Jailani that the residents of Barangay Pitogo in Luuk, went missing at around 1:45 p.m. on Thursday.

Fisherman's tale

Tulawie earlier also quoted fisherman Julhali Labuani, 45, as narrating that he saw a Navy gunboat with vessel number 419 arrest those on board the two pump boats.

Labuani reported what happened to the relatives of the victims.

"I am aware of the consequences of my testimony. I am willing to die," Tulawie quoted Labuani as saying.

Abdulraki Ismael, 28, had appealed to the Navy, if it had them, to release the victims, including his wife Muhilma and their two children Marlyn, 4, and Alfari, 2.

"What has my wife or my family done to the military for them to be apprehended?" Ismael was earlier quoted as saying.

Wahid Ibrahim, 40, said his children Nuriya, 15, and Adzmir, 13, were also in the boats.

"They were on their way to attend a wedding party in Tongkil, but they didn't reach Tongkil," Ibrahim said.

"Our units there didn't apprehend or arrest any civilian in that area," Defensor said earlier.

"Besides, we don't have a Navy gunboat with number 419," he said.

Human rights groups have reported several instances of warrantless arrests in Muslim-dominated areas in Mindanao that were results of the government's search for suspects in terror attacks on the island.

But the military continued to deny involvement in human rights abuses, especially among Muslims on the island.

Workers told to use polls to press for ₱125 pay hike

BAGUIO CITY—THE PARTY-LIST group Anakpawis has urged 150,000 workers here to use their political influence in getting the passage of the wage bill, even if it meant withdrawing their votes from lawmakers who fail to deliver.

The group held a noise barrage here on Monday to draw the attention of employees and workers, many of whom live outside the city.

The group wanted workers to get action from Baguio Rep. Mauricio Domogan, the administration party's Lakas CMD coordinator for the Cordillera, as well as congressmen representing Pangasinan and the Cordillera and Ilocos regions.

Nida Tundagui, spokesperson for the group, said Malacañang was behind a congressman's decision to seek the withdrawal of House Bill No. 345, weeks after it passed the House of Representatives.

The bill, which was originally sponsored in 2001 by detained Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran, imposes gradual increments of a P125 across-the-board wage increase that would be completed by the end of 2007.

Cavite Rep. Jesus Crispin Remulla petitioned the House to recall the measure to correct legislative "defects" but the Senate committee on labor and employment accepted the wage bill when it was transmitted to the Senate on Jan. 22.

The bill has been criticized as a political ploy for the May elections.

But politics is behind pressures to derail the wage bill, Tundagui told workers and employees who gathered at the park.

"It is President Macapagal-Arroyo who is forcing the congressmen to back down, to remove their signatures from the wage bill," she said.

Opposition by the business sector to the wage bill continues.

In Cebu, the Cebu Investment Promotion Center (CIPC) said the proposed wage increase would have adverse effects both on workers and employers.

Joel Mari Yu, CIPC managing director, said increasing wages would drive investors away.

The Mandaue Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), in a position paper, said the proposed increase is counterproductive since it would "kill the small and medium enterprises in less competitive regions" and would lead to massive job losses.

Once the legislated wage increase is implemented, "definitely the industry will trim down their workers," Mandaue Chamber president Eric Ng Mendoza said.

Most of the 4,000 companies based in Mandaue City are classified as small and medium and labor-intensive, Mendoza said.

He added that the Mandaue Chamber preferred any increase to be set by the regional boards.

Francis Monera, Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry president, said the business sector was not opposed to any increase if it would be a result of consultations between management and labor. *Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon and Irene Sino Cruz, Inquirer Visayas*

P125
MANGGAGAI
9
EN. VILLAR
MR. SIPAG AT TIYAGA
P125
DAGDAG SAHOD
ISABATAS NA!
- Partido ng Manggagawa

WORKERS' groups keep the pressure on the passage of a bill that will mandate a P125 wage increase. They threaten to campaign against legislators who will oppose the bill. ROGER MARGALLO

TATAD ASKS ERAP – WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS TO OUR PEOPLE?

15 January 2007

PRESIDENT JOSEPH EJERCITO ESTRADA
Chairman Emeritus
UNITED OPPOSITION

Dear Mr. President:

I write to make of record my position on certain issues related to the May 2007 senatorial elections. My only concern is the honor of our party and wellbeing of our people.

I shall start by recalling our UNO meeting on Polk Street on New Year's day (morning). Joining the President then were Mayor Jojo Binay, Ernie Maceda, Tito Sotto, Chiz Escudero, Boy Morales, and myself. Fred Lim and Baby Asistio joined later.

The meeting followed no set agenda or structure. Tito Sotto had much to say about his group which he believed should be on the UNO ticket. This included:

1. Tessie Aquino Oreta, who did not seek reelection after her first term ended in 2001;
2. Sonny Osmeña, who ran unsuccessfully on the administration ticket in 2004;
3. Greg Honasan, who is now under detention on charges of rebellion following his highly publicized capture in Quezon City;
4. Loren Legarda, who wants to go back to the Senate at the cost of her vice presidential protest against Noli de Castro; and
5. Tito Sotto himself, who is back on entertainment tv in preparation for the campaign.

It was the first time I heard of this group earnestly wanting to run under the Opposition. Last year, they sent Johnny Rojas to represent them in our UNO meetings. From him we learned that they had been preparing to run, but that they would rather stay "somewhere in the middle," than identify themselves openly with the Opposition. Many of us (notably Jojo Binay) were particularly anxious about that statement. So I listened to Tito with undivided attention.

Tito and Chiz Escudero provided most of the conversation, with Ernie Maceda occasionally interjecting. Mention was made of:

1. Ping Lacson, who has abandoned his earlier decision to run for Mayor of Manila and decided instead to seek reelection;
2. Ed Angara, who was reported to be putting a "unity ticket," but in whose behalf Loren Legarda had reportedly telephoned the President for possible inclusion in the Opposition lineup;
3. Manny Villar and his group, which includes Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto, and Kiko Pangilinan; and
4. Drilon's Liberal Party, which was reported to be pushing for Noynoy Aquino's inclusion in the UNO slate.

No one opposed Lacson's reentry, but no one pushed for Angara's inclusion. There was not much information about Villar's group – not even Jojo Binay could say whether or not his friend Joker was running again. The President said he expects to meet shortly with Villar. Upon mention of Noynoy Aquino's name, Tito Sotto promptly cut in to say that between Noynoy and his auntie, Tessie Aquino Oreta, the latter would have better chances of winning. Fred Lim disagreed, saying that if Noynoy ran, his sister Kris Aquino, who is a tv host, would certainly ensure his winning.

I made two short interventions.

1) I proposed that UNO set some criteria or standards before admitting anyone who wants to ride the Opposition bandwagon. Some of these people had junked the President without ceremony to support Mrs. Arroyo in 2001 and 2004; now they want UNO to give them a ride because it seems no longer profitable to be identified with Mrs. Arroyo, although they have not openly abandoned her. They want to collect on every throw of the dice even after they've lost the game. And we seem so eager to provide the revolving door for their crass opportunism. Has it never occurred to us that UNO, rather than Ed Angara whom UNO has excluded from its lineup, could end up putting together the "UNITY TICKET" that combines the best and the worst administration and Opposition personalities?

2) With great pain, I expressed some reservations about drafting Koko Pimentel, Alan Peter Cayetano, and J.V. Ejercito as UNO candidates while Koko's father – Senate Minority Leader Nene Pimentel, Alan Peter's sister – Sen. Pia Cayetano, and J.V. Ejercito's half-brother – Sen. Jinggoy Estrada are sitting in the Senate until 2010. I just could not accept the idea of such bright young men doing what the "trapo to end all trapos" would probably not do, and for the Senate, with all its absurdities, to end up as a mad and shallow "Family Ball." Where Malacañang failed, UNO just might succeed – we would abolish the Senate's reason for being.

I would have been proud to campaign for these young men if this one impediment did not exist, or if their next of kin gave up their Senate seats right now. But under the circumstances, the Titanic would sink if the three wonders came on board. I would rather encourage J.V. Ejercito to go for a third term as Mayor of San Juan; Koko Pimentel to try his luck a second time in Cagayan de Oro, where he lost his mayoralty bid when his father was Senate President; and Alan Peter to do something exciting in Taguig in the meantime. They have all the time in the world to wait; they can wait; they should wait.

I had to die in that meeting to be able to say the first line of a long sentence. I had already lost too many friends because of politics and I did not want to lose any more than I already have. But the truth needed to be said, and nobody else seemed willing to say it. I had to take the risk. The ancients said it so well: *Amicus Pluto, amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas* – "Plato is dear to me, Socrates is dear, but the truth is dearer still."

This was not a question of the Constitution or the law, but simply of ethics – of what is right and proper. Article II, Sec. 26 of the 1987 Constitution says, *"The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law."* No enabling law has been enacted, but we have a serious moral duty to live by the spirit of the Constitution, and not to make the problem of dynasties any more messy than it already is.

Political dynasties are either appreciated or hated, tolerated or feared. But even in the worst of cases, dynastic family members try simultaneously to occupy as many different offices as possible, or else they alternate or rotate in holding on to a particular office that allows them to exercise power. Never do they sit together in the same office at the same time. This is precisely what the three young men's senatorial bid threatens to alter.

The obvious assumption is that the voters are so pissed off with GMA that they will eat any kind of dung we give them. This is false. We cannot have such a very poor opinion of our people. In the end, they will prove us wrong, whatever the paid pollsters tell us. But should error and madness prevail, three families would be holding six Senate seats – one fourth of the Senate – after May 2007. Thereafter, twelve or eight or six families could end up controlling all 24 seats. Husbands and wives, together with their sons and daughters, and uncles and aunties, why not, could end up running as one big gang.

You, Mr. President, and we, your friends in UNO, have a special responsibility to make sure this does not even begin to happen. The Senate is a small body of 24 members, representing a nation of 90 million Filipinos or about 18 million families. No single family has a vested right to be represented there. Membership in the Senate is a privilege conferred by the people. It is a gift from them, except when cheats manage to rig the electoral process. No two senators from a single nuclear family had ever sat there until Jinggoy was elected in 2004, after his mother Sen. Loi Estrada had been elected in 2001. But this was the result of an extraordinary situation, an exception which proves the rule.

We all know how and why it happened. In 2001, the President was removed in a coup after his impeachment trial was cut short by a walkout of the prosecutors. He wanted to show – and the Opposition and the voters agreed with him then – that despite his removal he continued to enjoy popular support which the people were willing to translate into Senate seats for his wife Loi and his son Jinggoy. That, however, was to be a one-shot deal only, not to be used as a precedent or model.

Now that Senator Loi has decided, in your words, "to retire" and become your "caregiver," that exceptional situation would cease to exist, and what many believe was truly an error would be finally cured. But were the President to inflict his other son J. V. Ejercito on the UNO ticket, then he would be perpetuating the error, and encouraging others to follow his example, as seems to be happening now to the two otherwise bright young men – Alan Peter Cayetano and Koko Pimentel.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT BY ANTI-DYNASTY MOVEMENT

ADVT

Not only would the President be perpetuating an error, he would also be confirming the suspicion of those who reject any possibility of his assuming any leadership role in the post-Arroyo scenario before or after 2010 – that his idea of the national interest is seriously impaired by his devotion to the personal. This is totally unnecessary and unfair.

We at UNO cannot possibly support this error without in effect telling the masses, whose champions we say we are, that, contrary to what we have been saying to them, and what we have led them to believe, our primary interest has never been to serve them but only to serve ourselves. We would thereby be throwing away our moral advantage, and making our party the most effective campaigners for the administration.

I have no doubt that if the administration tried to do what the leader of UNO wants to do now, we would be the first ones to shout to the high heavens in outrage and anger. Why then should we ever want to do it ourselves? Our people expect us to do better, and we have so assured them. Have we been lying to them all this time that we have been saying that Mrs. Arroyo is the liar? If we are no better than the ones we denounce, what right have we to be here at all? To whom will our people turn if they see that the administration and the Opposition have cancelled each other out? Would this not be the cruelest betrayal?

In the meeting, I waited to hear someone say I was wrong. I waited to be told that the reason or reasons for drafting the three next of kin of sitting senators were far beyond my ability to grasp in one short lifetime. But there was no effort to shoot down or refute my objection. No effort to explain why UNO has to have all the star fruits and the three wonders on its dream ticket. You will, therefore, understand why when you and Ernie Maceda agreed to release to the media the names of the three wonders as part of your proposed ticket, while my objection was waiting to be addressed, I felt that my long service to the Opposition and my presence in that meeting had just been annulled. That was the worst possible slap I had ever received – and from my party colleagues yet. For that reason, I decided that any future participation in any UNO activity on my part would be completely superfluous.

The real issue here is our moral integrity as the presumed alternative to the Arroyo government. I have fought for this, a little more than many of those you see in the street marches. After the 2001 coup, many simply decided to cross over to the administration. Many others decided to watch and see, to bury their heads in the sand, or to negotiate the terms of mutually beneficial coexistence. I decided to keep on clarifying the issues for myself, the Opposition, and the nation. Many of those now groveling before you used to laugh at the very line which they now superficially spout for your pleasure. There were times when all I could hear was my lone solitary voice – and that of Professor Alan Paguia, whose right to practice and teach law has since been cancelled – madly questioning President Arroyo's legitimacy after almost everyone else had caved in.

But I refused to back down. With the help of a few brave souls on the *Citizens vs. Corruption Task Force*, I continued to expose major scams in the government, including the P100-billion customs bonds scam, the P100-million DOTC airport land scam, the $2-million BSP fund diversion in Hong Kong, the misuse of OWA funds, and the P728-million Agricultural Modernization Fund scam, now known as the Jocjoc Bolante affair, which became *cause celebre* at the Senate in 2006, two years after I had exposed it at the start of the 2004 campaign.

That entailed a heavy price, and I paid it in full. In the 2004 elections, which I thought was the best of my senatorial campaign, I was singled out for demolition. This was known to PMP and to KNP, whose members had read or heard about Oplan Checkmate, which detailed the plot against our presidential ticket and me, and which had surfaced at the start of the campaign. As always, you did what you could to help, but if there was any party or coalition effort to save my candidacy from the Oplan, it never caught my attention.

On the campaign trail, radio-tv coverage suddenly vanished as soon as it was my turn to speak. My campaign posters everywhere were brought down by the wrecking crew in less than 24 hours. On election day, my name disappeared from the 12-man KNP senatorial slate on the Comelec official list of candidates posted in every voting booth to guide voters, and appeared separately as the lone PMP senatorial candidate at the bottom of the printed form.

At the counting, my votes mysteriously shrank by something like 80% as they traveled from the *barangay* precinct to the national canvassing center. In contrast, the votes of one losing candidate were padded by at least 200% to make the recipient one of the top senatorial winners. Ultimately, my recorded "historic vote" – a term known to seasoned political players and analysts – which in two successful senatorial elections had risen to close to 11 million by 1995 was savaged to nearly half that number.

Today, I am defendant in a criminal libel case filed by the First Gentleman in a Manila court arising from a 2004 post-election newspaper article which attributes to me certain statements that are not even slightly libelous. My name had been dropped from the complaint in 2004 but was reinstated in 2006, upon motion of the complainant – after the supposed crime had legally prescribed.

All this is par for the course. None of it should have been mentioned here were I not obliged to show that I have earned the right to be heard on the basic morality of our cause.

Before I left Polk street, you came over to say you would like to have me included in your senatorial slate. I begged off. "Please don't, Mr. President," I said. You tried to insist, but I pleaded, "please, Mr. President." You did not say so, but you seemed to be under the impression that I was objecting to certain candidacies because I wanted to be a candidate myself. That was not the point at all. It was a total misimpression. We should know each other well enough by now for you to know if there was anything I have ever done or would ever do just for my own self-interest.

My one consuming desire is to see the country return to a state of normalcy where all can live a morally upright life, and one does not have to be part of a power structure to get the respect he deserves. Where law and justice are one and truth presides, where deserving individuals are elected to high office because the office needs them, and not because they need the office. For this reason, I wanted to see electoral reforms before the parade of celebrities and popular incompetents begins. Thus, I was for boycotting the elections if no electoral reforms were put in place. However, that position was quickly vaporized after a swarm of ambitious innocents, whose idea of national politics consists purely of packing public office with synthetic personalities, started hyping the Opposition's alleged ability to give Mrs. Arroyo the same "thumping" the Democrats gave the Republicans in the last U.S. elections. This was capped by the President's premature announcement of his dream ticket.

This, I thought, was a serious mistake, as did a number of respected foreign analysts. Under these circumstances, I could not bring myself to consider running again, even though I honestly believe I had the right and duty to regain the Senate seat which was fraudulently taken away from me in 2004. So when you asked me why I would not want to join your ticket, I said: first, because I wasn't sure elections would be held – (to date, there is still no budget); second, because I wasn't sure the elections would be honest, assuming they were held – we have not insisted on electoral reforms and no reforms have been put in place; third, because I did not believe I could be part of a ticket whose other candidates I could not even endorse to the public. There were two other reasons: I could not allow it to interrupt the joys of grand parenting, and I need to honor some publishing commitments, which could no longer be delayed.

This, for me then, is a new turning point. I began my political career in 1969, when I was appointed to the Cabinet at 29, the youngest such appointee in our history. Through the years, I have fought many fights, many of them lost causes. I have not learned to exchange principle for personal pleasure or profit, and I have always paid the price. This allows me to stand on my own, with no fear of powers or personalities, of the dark or of the light; to snore quietly in my sleep every night in the hope of waking up in the morning to a loving and merciful God; to speak up whenever truth demands a witness, and something that needs to be said in speech and in silence is not being said.

I would be untrue to myself if I said that what the leaders of UNO propose to do with their "UNITY TICKET" is right. It is most certainly not, and I will not dishonor our friendship by keeping silent or pretending that it is right, or of little or no consequence. I want to thank you for your friendship and for the many personal kindnesses you have extended to me and to my wife, in the course of that friendship. We shall remain friends for as long as we both put ourselves and our personal interests in the service of truth, justice, and the common good.

May the good Lord guide you always.

Sincerely yours,

FRANCISCO S. TATAD

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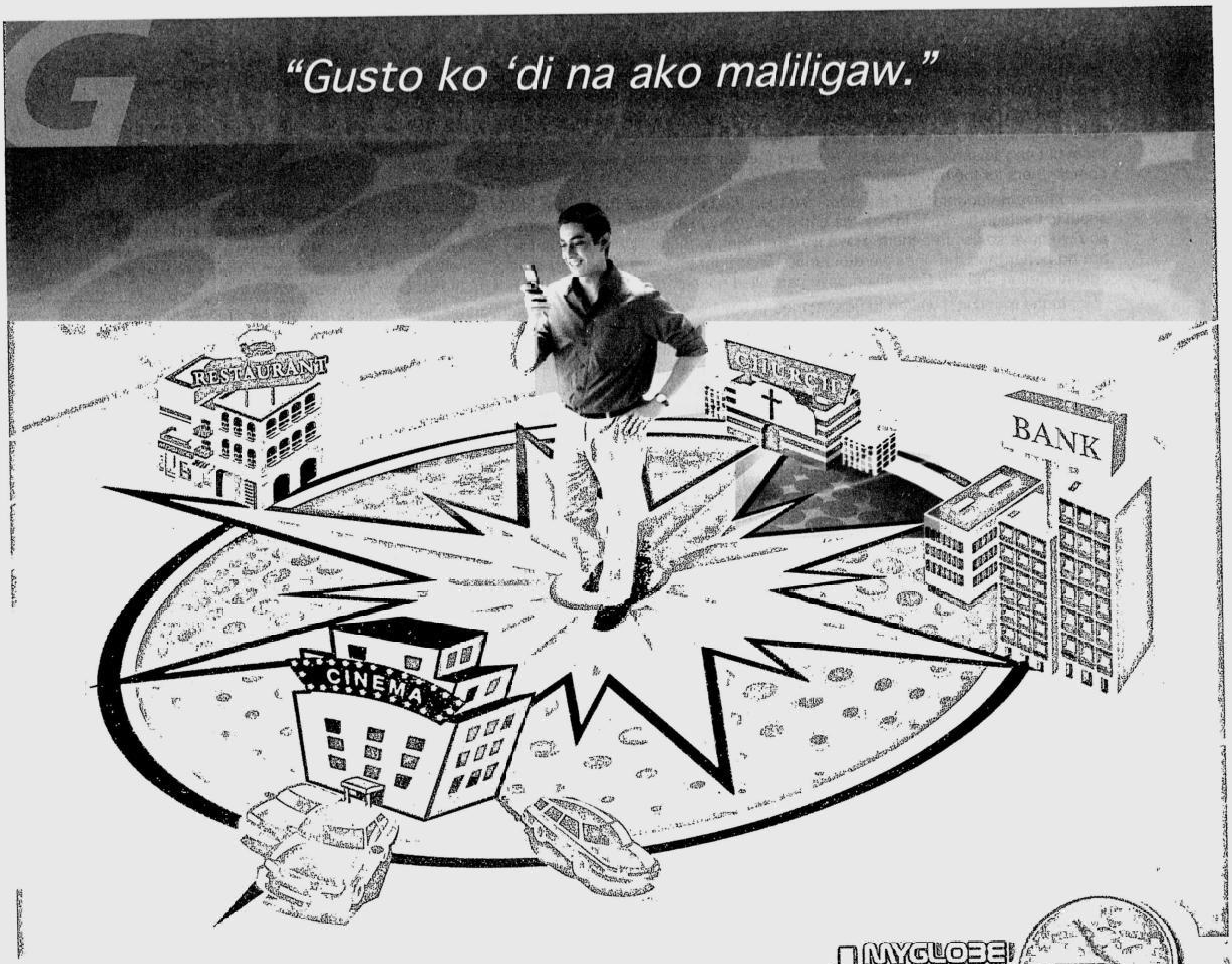

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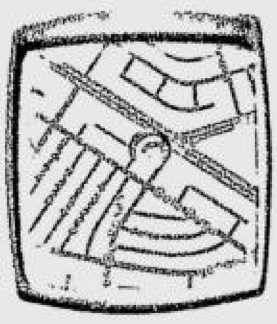

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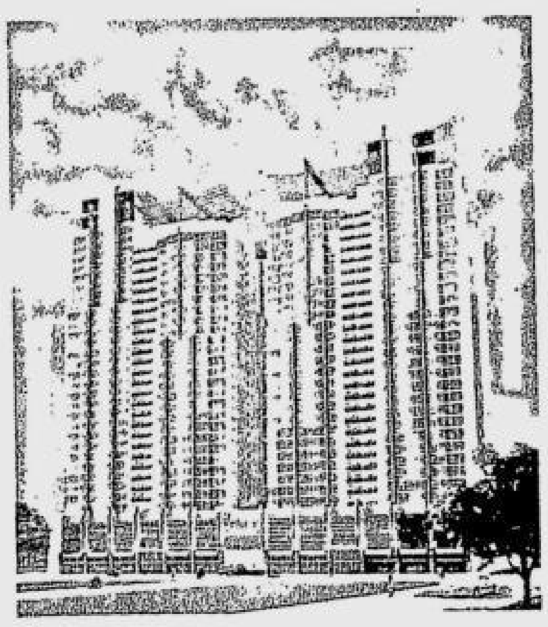

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'Evidence against shabu mart owner strong'

Justice chief's statements disheartening, police say

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Leila B. Salaverria

THE POLICE OFFICIAL SECURING THE PRIMARY witness against the alleged owner of the compound of shabu restaurants unearthed in Pasig City last year expressed disappointment yesterday over statements made by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez about the case.

Pasig police chief, Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami, told the INQUIRER, "It is very disheartening."

In a report which came out Monday in the INQUIRER, Gonzalez said evidence against alleged shabu tiangge owner Amin Imam Boratong was weak and that police witness Samir Palao was not credible. His comments were contained in three memoranda he issued to public prosecutors handling the case.

"The case has been admitted by the court because we have sufficient evidence. The case is strong. It is unfortunate (if he said that)," Uyami added.

The INQUIRER called up public prosecutors handling the case to get their reaction but one of them said in a text message, "We will not give any interview. Sorry."

The anticrime group Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, meanwhile, said it would present an alleged victim of Boratong to media men this week.

"(We) hope Secretary Gonzalez will listen to the victims of Boratong first before issuing statements that may influence the investigation of the complaint," VACC founding chair Dante Jimenez said in a text message to the INQUIRER.

Boratong's lawyer, Raymund Fortun, refused to comment on whether or not Gonzalez's statements were favorable to his client.

"I will not draw any conclusion from what he has stated so far. It is his own opinion," Fortun, who was in Baguio City, told the INQUIRER over the phone.

Gonzalez, meanwhile, defended his statements and said that not only was the physical evidence against Boratong weak, Palao was also a "polluted source" who could be working with the police to extort money from the suspect.

The justice secretary, who cast doubt on the police's motive for using Palao against Boratong, called for an independent probe body to investigate Palao, the police and even himself.

Gonzalez said the independent body could be similar to the Melo Commission or may be composed of joint operatives from the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police.

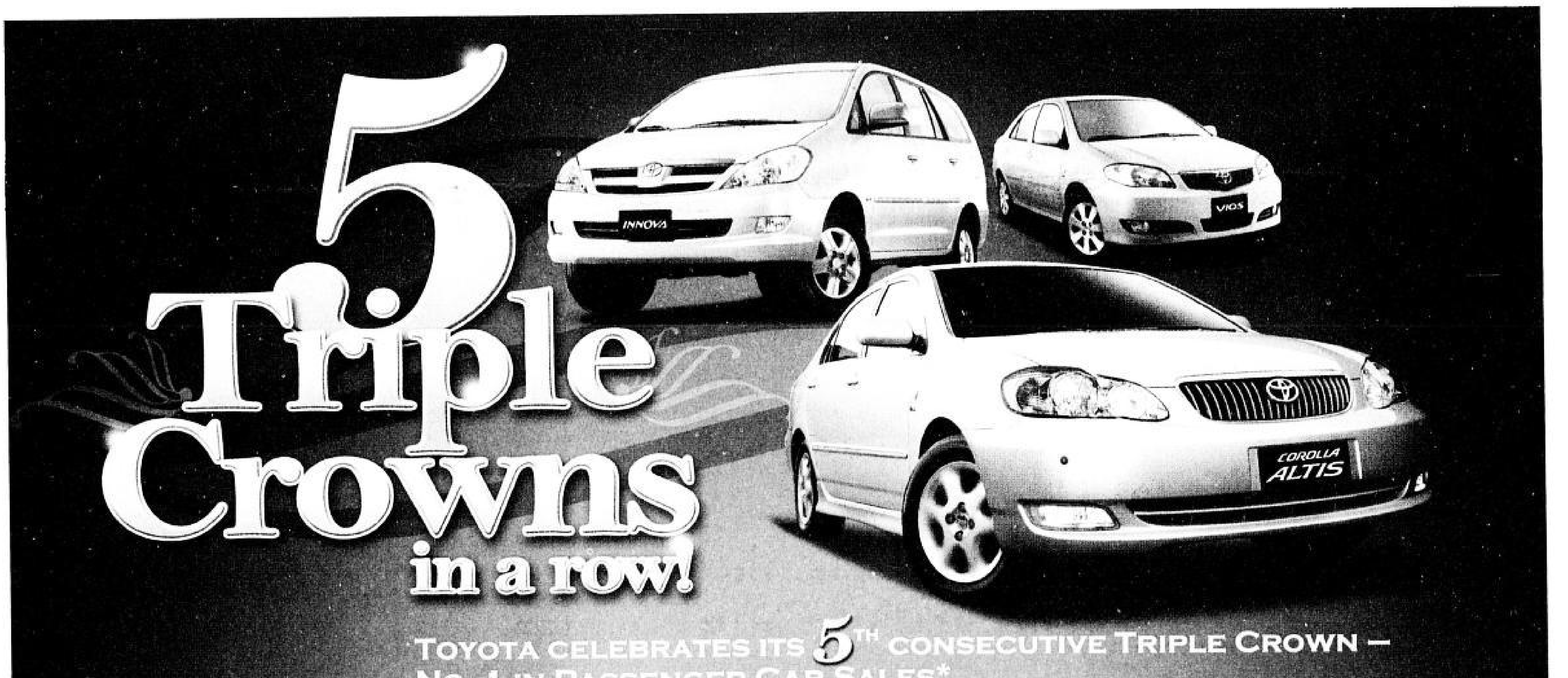
"You know, these things should be investigated completely by an independent body other than the NBI. Maybe the PNP and NBI can investigate jointly Palao and the policemen involved. What are the stakes of each one? Why are the police interested in Palao, for example?" he told reporters.

"*Sama na nila ako diyan kung gusto nila ako imbestigahan* (They should include me there if they want to investigate me)," he added.

EVIDENCE/ A20

DELIGHTFUL TO LOOK AT BUT ... Birds go on sale at a public market in Manila even as health officials recently cautioned the public to be on the alert following the resurgence of the bird flu virus in Asia. RYAN LIM

HOW TO SET UP AND MANAGE AN NGO OR FOUNDATION SEMINAR, FEB. 7, 2007. Topics: Getting Organized; Complete Project Cycle; Sourcing of Funding; Best practices and Techniques; & Sustainability. Venue: Richville Hotel, 286 EDSA, Mandaluyong City, 1-5 PM. To register, please call Tritium Knowledge Center Publishing at 578-9833, 531-0084, CP: 0919-229-9777; 0919-229-9780; 0915-780-4379 or email: tritium@pldtdsl.net or tkcp_ph@yahoo.com. Limited seats only. Register Now!



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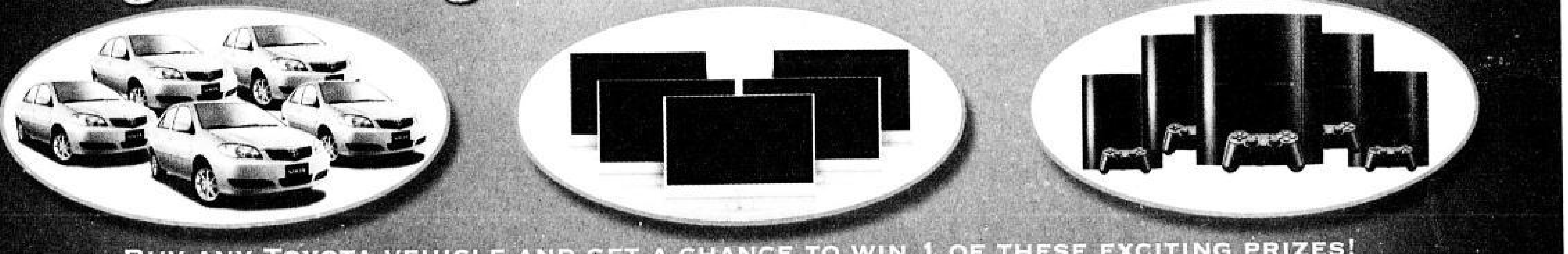

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QC Police District, SWAT team win top honors

By Julie M. Aurelio

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION Police Office yesterday declared the Quezon City Police District the best police district in the metropolis for 2006.

In second place was the Manila Police District, followed by the Northern Police District covering the Camanava (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas and Valenzuela) area.

Double honor

Aside from winning the top award, the QCPD's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team was also adjudged the best among the other SWAT teams in Metro Manila.

The recipients of the various awards were announced by the NCRPO in preparation for its celebration of the 16th anniversary of the Philippine National Police next month.

Also cited were the Valenzuela Police Station for best police station, MPD's Station 11 for best numbered police station and the Makati police's women and children's concerns desk for best women's desk.

Outstanding policemen

Other awardees were Senior Supt. Federico Laciste Jr. (senior police commissioned officer for administration category), Supt. Ericson Velasquez (senior police commissioned officer for operation category), Insp. Ferjen Torred (junior police commissioned officer category), PO1 Emelson Madronio (junior police noncommissioned officer category), Supt. Lilian Castillo (policewoman of the year) and Judy Clemente (nonuniformed personnel of the year).

Cooperating agencies

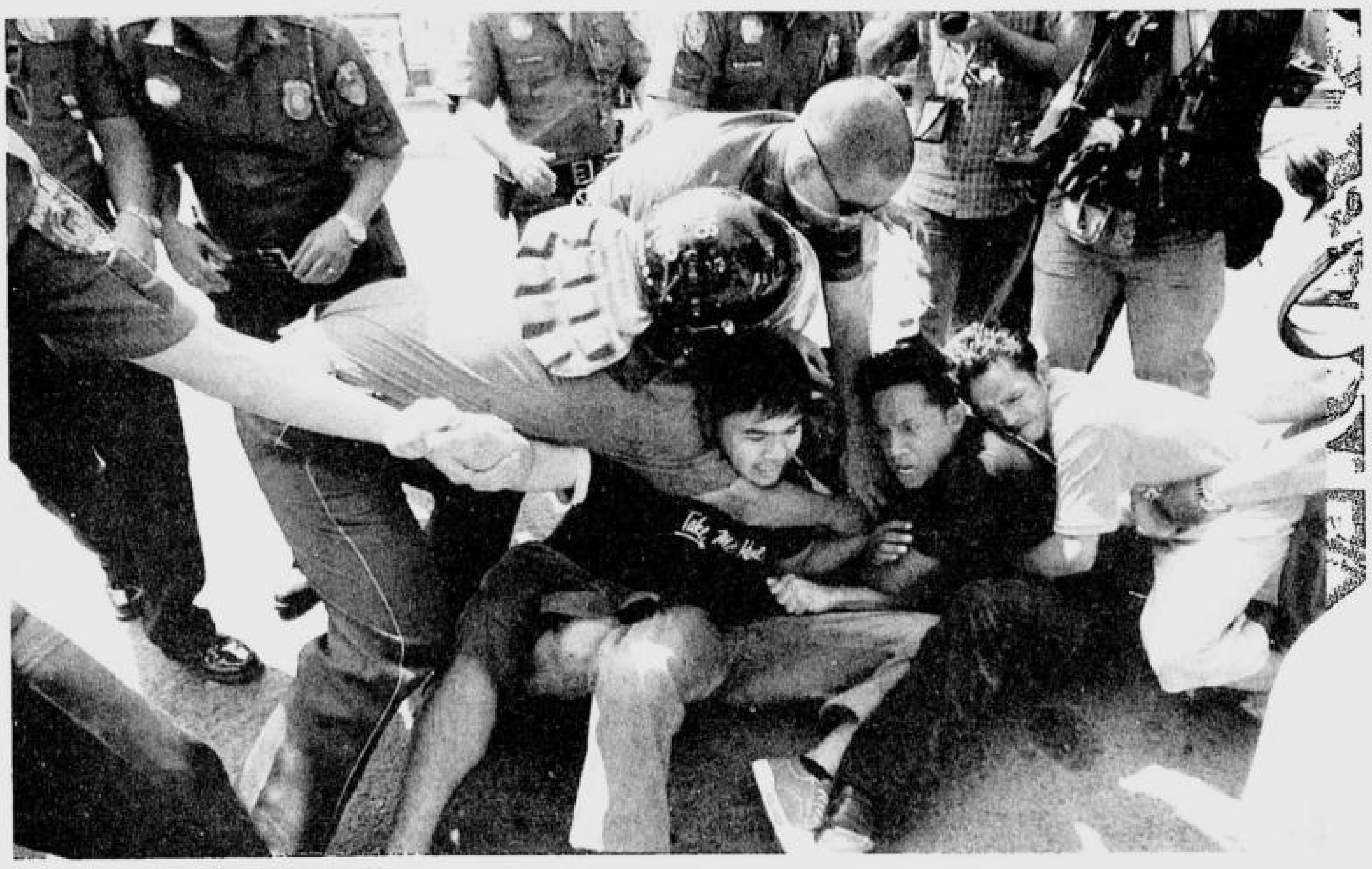
The NCRPO awards committee likewise cited an individual and several nongovernment organizations for supporting its peace and order programs.

Among the recipients were the Valenzuela Business Club, Bread of Life Ministries, PNP Civilian Alliance Inc. Makati chapter, the Department of Public Works and Highways, Kapasigan FX Operators and Drivers Association in Pasig and George Lee, president of the Chinese-Filipino Business Club Inc.

Awarding ceremony

The winners will be recognized on Thursday, Feb. 1, 8 a.m. on the NCRPO grounds in Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig City.

In 2005, the Southern Police District was chosen the best police district in the National Capital Region. It was also the winner in 2004.



FALLEN BUT STILL DEFIANT
Members of the militant group, Youth for Nationalism and Democracy, continue to struggle even after their arrest by policemen following a rally in front of Malacañang Palace. The group was protesting the antiterrorism bill.
REM ZAMORA

Suspect confesses to raping 8-year-old

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

BOTHERED BY HIS CONSCIENCE, a 19-year-old suspect admitted that he also raped the 8-year-old girl whose body was found in Taytay, Rizal, days after her mother reported her missing.

Police said that Elvin Gonzales made the confession as he also named his mother, Evelyn Amaba, 41, as the mastermind.

"He told us his conscience bothered him," Pasig City police investigation chief Senior Insp. Lorenzo Trajano told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Trajano, however, said they would wait for the report of the Scene of the Crime Operation to determine if the girl, Maricis Labarientos, was indeed raped.

Pasig police chief, Senior Supt. Francisco Uyami, had earlier said that an unpaid debt amounting to P30,000 could have triggered the crime.

Amaba admitted that the girl's mother, Mylene, had borrowed P30,000 from her and had not paid her back.

Amaba, however, denied that she and the other suspects kidnapped and killed the girl to get back at Mylene.

Gonzales, Amaba and her brother-in-law, Santiago Villanueva, were arrested on Jan. 23 for their alleged involvement in the kidnapping of Maricris who was reported missing on Jan. 21.

A witness had earlier told the police that she saw the three suspects with the girl a few hours before she disappeared.

Amaba's live-in partner, Ellie Gonzales, was also arrested but the police released him for lack of evidence.

On Jan. 25, the girl's naked body was found in a canal in Barangay Dolores, Taytay. Her face bore burns.

The Rizal provincial police have arrested another suspect in Taytay, Rizal although Ellie Gonzales remains at large, Trajano added.

Police have already filed kidnapping with homicide charges against the suspects.

Trajano said they would wait for the Soco report to know if they should include rape in the charges.

Tulfo brothers post P10,000 bail bond

By DJ Yap

JOURNALIST RAMON TULFO and his brother, Raffy, yesterday posted bail of P10,000 each in connection with the multimillion libel suit filed against them by the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Another coaccused, their younger brother, Erwin, posted bail two days earlier after a Quezon City prosecutor found probable cause to charge the Tulfos in court.

The brothers' arraignment was set on Feb. 28, in which they are expected to enter a plea to charges that they maligned Arroyo during a press conference in a Quezon City restaurant on Aug. 2.

Arroyo had said the brothers made libelous statements during that press conference, in which they accused him of having a hand in the cancellation of their TV show, "Isumbong Mo (Tulfo Brothers)," on government-run RPN 9.

The President's husband also cried foul over the brothers' claim that he had been angered by Ramon's allegations that he was a protector of the smuggling activities of his rumored mistress, Vicky Toh.

In their counteraffidavits, the Tulfos denied that the statements they had made during the press conference constituted libel.

"The remarks I made during the press conference constitute fair reports, commentaries and/or opinions on a matter of public interest and concern, namely, the interference of a powerful and influential individual in a government-controlled television station in an effort to silence my constitutional freedom of expression," Ramon said.

"Hence, my remarks are privileged in nature and constitutionally protected," he added.

Ramon also said there was no libel in the case because Arroyo was never directly identified. "I referred to the person ... simply as Mr. Big," Tulfo added.

In his affidavit, Erwin said his participation in the press conference was part of his journalistic duty to "inform the public of the attempts of those in power to muzzle the press."

METROBRIEFS

Hospital break-in

WORKERS of a hospital in Mandaluyong were surprised when they came to work yesterday and saw that several doors inside the building had been forced open. An initial police investigation, however, showed that nothing had been stolen from several rooms inside the Victor R. Potenciano Medical Center. Case investigator PO3 Carlito Guillarte said that the suspects, who have yet to be identified, broke into the hospital by destroying the employees' entrance. At least four rooms on the second floor which houses the offices of the hospital director, medical director, administration division head and quality management representative had also been forcibly opened, the police said. The motive for the break-in has yet to be established since there were no valuables lost, Guillarte said. "They could have been looking for important documents," he added.

Emman Cena

Fire hits stalls

PANIC gripped stall owners at the Mutya ng Pasig Public Market in Pasig City the other night after fire broke out inside two stalls full of grocery items. It was not enough, however, to stop at least four men from taking advantage of the commotion. Police and firefighters arrested them for allegedly trying to steal some items from the burning stalls, FO1 Salvador Norberte told the INQUIRER. At least P500,000 worth of goods were damaged. Norberte said they were looking at the possibility the fire was electricity-related.

Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Robbers strike

TWO MEN were shot by unidentified suspects inside a jeepney yesterday afternoon in Intramuros, Manila. The six suspects, allegedly wearing security guard uniforms, shot Frederick Agustin and Francis Patricio at around 2:10 p.m. and grabbed the black bag being carried by one of the victims. Agustin was declared dead on arrival at the Philippine General Hospital while his colleague, Patricio, is still undergoing treatment, initial investigation of the Manila Police District (MPD) showed. Police said the incident took place on Gen. Luna Street in Intramuros, Manila. The suspects, who apparently knew that the black bag contained cash, followed the victims' jeepney and shot them. The suspects, who were on board three motorcycles, immediately escaped after the incident.

Margaux C. Ortiz

Midwife loses valuables to thief

By Julie M. Aurelio

IT WAS NOT THE HOMECOMING she expected.

Aminah Macabando, a midwife, came home from an out-of-town trip on Sunday night only to find out that her house had been burglarized.

She lost more than P500,000 in cash and jewelry to the robber, who, according to her neighbors, was a man who went inside her house several times.

Macabando had just returned from a three-day vacation in Baguio City at 11 p.m. Sunday. But when she got to her apartment at 179 Valerio Street, Gatchalian Subdivision in Manuyo 2, Las Piñas, she found out that the door to her kitchen had been forced open.

Inside the master's bedroom, the lock of the drawer in which she kept her valuables had also been destroyed.

Missing were P80,000 in cash and P450,000 worth of jewelry which included bracelets, rings, earrings and necklaces.

Her neighbors told Macabando that they saw a man walking near her apartment on Thursday night.

"My neighbors told me that the (male) suspect even went back to my place several times after he broke in," the 27-year-old midwife said.

"It seems that the thief really knew where to go and what to look for," she added.

However, Macabando said she has no idea who the thief could be.

$5-M reward should go to the Marine Corps

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

I'D LIKE TO THANK MY FRIENDS who texted me their reaction to my column on Saturday about the vision I had in India during my 10-day spiritual sojourn there.

One of them was fellow columnist Jarius Bondoc. He said that God does not curse His creatures, even "sinners like you and me."

Jarius, I wasn't referring to God when I mentioned that I wanted a "curse I may have that led to my present predicament." I was referring to the gods in this country.

One of these gods is Oscar Calderon, Philippine National Police chief. He thinks that I should kneel down before him in order for me to get a permit to carry my licensed gun.

As you well know, Jarius, I need to carry a gun for my protection because of threats to my life.

Calderon hasn't given me a reason for his refusal to give me a permit when all his predecessors did so.

I hate to invoke this since I'm not in the habit of tooting my horn, but the PNP should give me a permit to carry a gun if only out of a sense of gratitude.

Early last year, the police antinarcotics task force raided a drug flea market near the Pasig City Hall based on a tip my brother Erwin and I provided the PNP. We had somebody get inside the flea market with a hidden video camera. Afterward, we reported our find to then PNP chief Arturo Lomibao.

Erwin and I received medals for that act of civic consciousness. Now, our lives are in danger from the syndicate that ran the flea market.

If Calderon could give permits to carry to boxer Manny Pacquiao for his 20 guns, why can't he do the same for me?

I approached a higher god, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, after Calderon's repeated refusal of my request.

I thought Puno would be of help since his brother Dong is my close friend and *compadre*. But Puno refuses to talk to me. I have no problem obtaining an exemption from the gun ban from the Commission on Elections (Comelec). Chair Benjamin Abalos knows my situation and has promised to give me an exemption, as long as I can get a gun-carry permit from the PNP.

Does this mean I have to pay obeisance to the highest god, in the same category as Jupiter, so I can be given a permit?

* * *

Why is it that whenever a warrant of arrest is issued against persons charged with libel by a powerful figure, it almost always comes out late Friday?

Is it because the accused won't have a chance to post bail if he gets arrested on Saturday or Sunday since courts are closed on weekends?

A Quezon City Regional Trial Court issued arrest warrants for Erwin, Raffy and I on Friday afternoon. Erwin was able to post his bail, but Raffy and I couldn't since I was writing this column and Raffy was doing his radio program.

The two of us had to sleep outside our homes for the weekend in case the police came knocking.

* * *

The Marines who killed Abu Sayyaf senior leader Jainal Antel Sali, alias Abu Sulaiman, won't get the $5 million price on his head, since they were doing their job.

They've been given medals and promotions.

The money will go to an informant who gave away Sulaiman's whereabouts, according to the military.

Cow dung! That was a chance encounter. Nobody tipped off the authorities to Sulaiman's hideout.

Don't be surprised if somebody materializes from thin air to claim the $5 million.

The US government, the source of the reward money, should be wise to the corrupt ways of some of our government people.

If Uncle Sam really wants to hand out the reward, it should be given to the Philippine Marine Corps. The money, equivalent to P250 million, would go a long way toward improving the morale of the AFP's "fightingest" unit.

Evidence ...

From page A19

"As of now, the evidence is very weak against (Boratong). The only evidence against him is what Palao has been talking about. But there is also evidence that Palao was actually the one running that place and ... he was being used by the police," Gonzalez claimed.

But he added that Boratong would have to explain why he went into hiding following the raid on the shabu compound and why he underwent plastic surgery to change his features.

Gonzalez also said that Palao, with his string of criminal records, was not exactly untainted himself. He said Palao has drug charges pending before the Pasig Regional Trial Court, on top of murder charges filed at a Quezon City court and frustrated murder charges pending at the Digos City court in Davao.

"The only evidence against (Boratong) is coming from Palao. That is a polluted source already," he added.

According to Gonzalez, Palao could not be a witness since he was guilty himself, being the actual operator of the shabu market based on information provided to the justice department.

"Actually, our evidence shows that he is the one really running the shabu market and that he's pointing to his half-brother because he's trying to blackmail Boratong," he said. "He can't be a witness because he is guilty."

Gonzalez added that Palao could be in cahoots with the police to extort money from Boratong.

"We will be speculating right here, but as far as our information is concerned, Palao is their man," he said.

DID YOU KNOW

ON JAN. 30, 1970, exactly 37 years ago, about 5,000 persons—mostly students and young trade unionists—marched from the University Belt to Mendiola. They wanted to protest the violent dispersal on Jan. 26 of demonstrators who pelted with stones then President Ferdinand Marcos and wife Imelda after he delivered his first State of the Nation Address on his second term.

Soldiers and police prevented the marchers from getting near the gates of Malacañang Palace, leading to a clash that lasted overnight. Four activists died while scores of protesters, police and soldiers were injured.

The next two months saw more marches which were bigger and attended by students, young professionals, residents of urban poor communities and peasants. The period, considered as the golden age of student activism in the Philippines, is now known as the First Quarter Storm.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Arab Muslim to join Israel Cabinet for 1st time

JERUSALEM—THE ISRAELI government voted Sunday to appoint an Arab Muslim to the Cabinet for the first time in the history of the Jewish state, despite opposition from ultranationalists and some Arab lawmakers.

Ghaleb Majadleh, 53, from the center-left Labor party, becomes minister without portfolio in the coalition government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Majadleh, a long-time union leader, hailed his appointment as a historic step forward for relations between Jews and the minority Arab community in Israel.

"The appointment of the first Arab minister is a sign to the Arab citizens of Israel to push the Arabs toward social and political equality," he told AFP.

All cabinet members except for the ultranationalist Minister of Strategic Affairs, Avigdor Lieberman, voted in favor of his appointment, according to a senior government source.

In 2001, Salah Tarif, a member of the Druze minority, was made minister without portfolio but he resigned shortly afterwards after being indicted on corruption charges. He was convicted in December 2003.

Majadleh and sources close to Olmert said the two had agreed that Majadleh would be assigned a portfolio within weeks, possibly at the helm of a newly created ministry of science, culture and sport.

Government ministers also praised Majadleh's appointment, seen as a step by Labor to counter Lieberman's ultranationalist stance against Israel's 1.3 million Arabs, who make up about 20 percent of Israel's population.

"The time has come for an Arab minister in our Cabinet. I hail the decision," Deputy Prime Minster Shimon Peres told AFP.

Immigration Minister Zeev Boim said Majadleh's appointment was "a day of celebration for the state of Israel and especially for the Arab minority."

Lieberman has been accused of racism over his calls for the enforced transfer of Israeli Arabs and the land where the minority is concentrated in northern Israel to the West Bank.

Several Arab lawmakers, however, denounced the appointment of Majadleh, who replaces former culture minister Ophir Pines-Paz. Pines-Paz resigned in October in protest at Lieberman joining the government.

"It's not logical for an Arab minister to take the place of a Jewish minister who left the cabinet and resigned in protest against racism," Arab lawmaker Muhammad Barakei from the Communist Hadash Party told AFP.

"Majadleh is not an Arab minister, he is a Labor minister... and he will sign his name to all discriminatory policies against the Arabs."

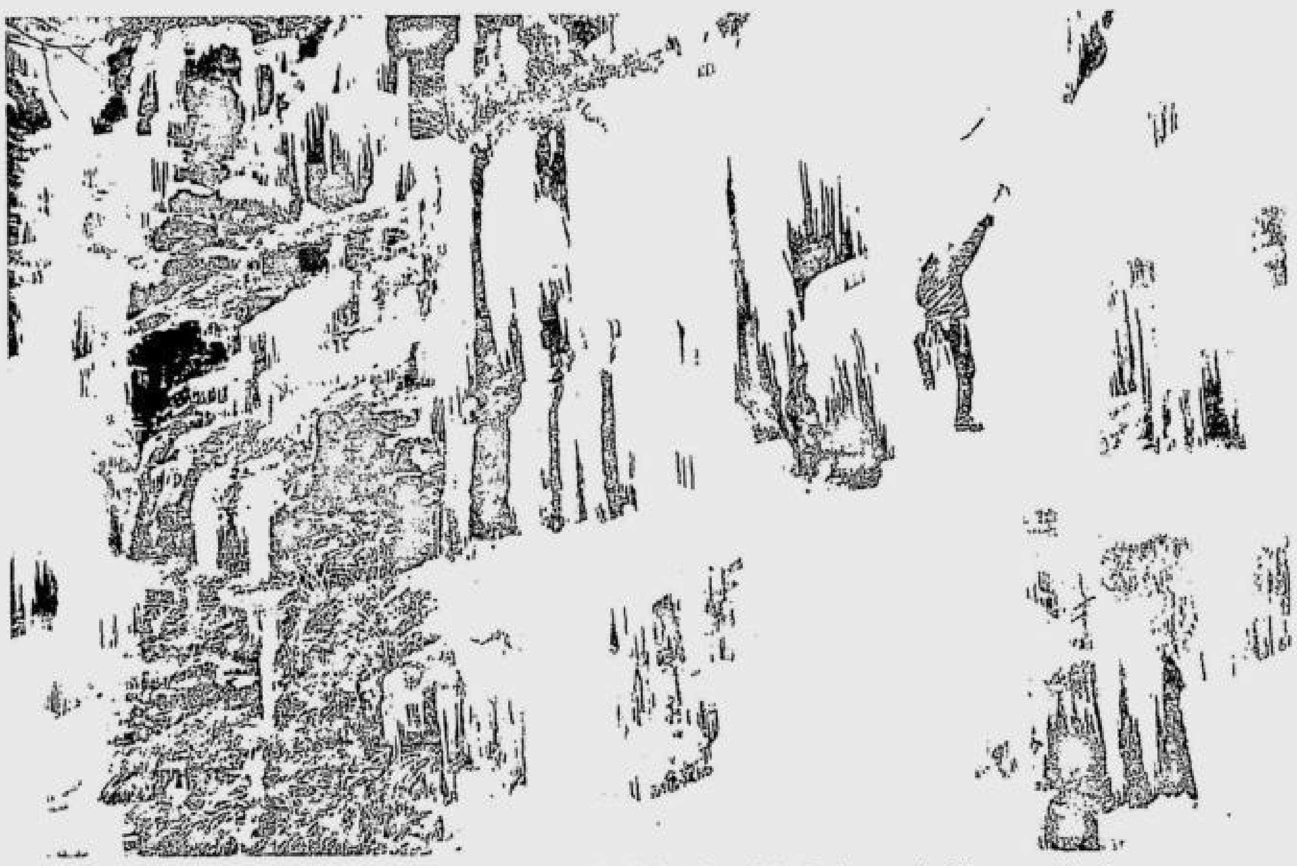
Labor leader Amir Peretz, facing an uphill battle to remain leader of the party, had pushed for the appointment of Majadleh, which many see as a bid to shore up the support of Arab members ahead of a party leadership vote in May.

Majadleh is a long time union leader from Baka Al-Gharbiya, an Arab village along Israel's border with the occupied West Bank. The father of four was elected to parliament for the first time in 2003.

Israeli Arabs are descendants of those 160,000 or so Palestinians who stayed behind when the Jewish state was declared in 1948 and did not join the exodus of refugees to neighboring Arab countries.

Arab-led parties account for 10 of the seats in the 120-member parliament, but Israeli Arabs do not serve in the military.

In July 2000, the Supreme Court recognized that Israeli Arabs faced discrimination particularly in employment and in September 2003 a state commission criticised the government after a two-and-a-half-year inquiry of not doing enough to put a stop to the problem. *AFP*



AN ICE climber ascends a frozen waterfall Jan. 28, at the Palisades of the Delaware, in Kintnersville, Pa. AP

Speed of climate change a 'major risk'

COMBLOUX, FRANCE—THERE IS no longer any doubt about the reality of global warming and the speed at which it is developing is a "major risk," a senior expert says.

"Is the climate changing? For the past few years there is no longer any doubt about it," said Herve le Treut, one of the world's top climate scientists who muster in Paris on Monday.

"Is the climate changing due to human activity, the response is more and more certainly, yes," Le Treut, the director of the dynamic meteorology laboratory at the Pierre-Simon Laplace institute in eastern France, told AFP in an interview.

On Friday the hundreds of experts at the Paris meeting of the Intergovernmental Experts Group on Climate Change (GIEC) will issue the first update in six years of the scientific evidence for global warming.

It is expected to be the bleakest assessment yet about global warming and its effects on climate.

"The major risk is that of the speed of climate change," he said, pointing to the increased risks posed by the changing nature of society.

"If we were in a very stable world it would not be so bad if it were a bit hotter or a bit colder.

But the risk is of a very quick transition that we can have from one world to another, because it is very destabilizing at every level, including socially and politically," he said.

He said scientists were becoming more confident in their evaluations as events had backed up previous predictions.

"Every period that passes strengthens the previous conclusions," he said.

"Science is developing in the direction of confirming the first simulations. For the past 20 years the level of confidence that we can have in what is said and the way in which things are backed up from the scientific point of view is enormous," he said. *AFP*

Saudi invites Palestinian foes to talks in Mecca

JERUSALEM—KING ABDULLAH OF SAUDI Arabia called on Sunday on the rival Palestinian factions to hold emergency talks in the holy city of Mecca in the latest bid to halt some of the worst ever Palestinian internal fighting.

As the two main factions, Hamas and Fatah, waged a fourth straight day of fighting in the Gaza Strip, leaders from both groups said they would take up the invitation by the Saudi monarch, though no date was set.

"I call on my brothers, the Palestinian people, represented by their leaders, to put an immediate end to this tragedy and to abide by righteousness," the king said in an announcement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Saudi Arabia does not have a tradition of such direct involvement in Palestinian affairs. But as one of the most important figures in the Arab world, the king, by his decision to hold the talks in Mecca, could increase the pressure on the Palestinian leaders to find a compromise.

However, efforts by other Arab states have failed to stop the bloodshed. Egypt has been acting as a go-between for months, and earlier this month, Syria organized talks between Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president and leader of the Fatah faction, and Khaled Meshal, the political leader in exile of the Islamic militant faction Hamas. But no breakthrough was achieved.

The feud between the factions has grown increasingly bitter since Hamas, the radical Islamic group, won parliamentary elections a year ago, unseating Fatah, the dominant Palestinian political movement for decades. Hamas controls the Cabinet and the Legislature, but as president, Abbas has a range of powers, and many members of the security forces remain loyal to Fatah. *NYT*

SANTA CATARINA

MISSING BEAUTY
Beauty queen Taiza Thomsen in an April 8, 2002, photo during that year's Miss Brazil contest. Thomsen, who won the 2002 Miss Brazil crown, has been reported missing since Thursday. Police said they would start investigations at the request of her family. AP

Mexico City's smog clears...a little

By Frank Jack Daniel

MEXICO CITY—HEAVY TRUCKS belch black smoke and lines of buses battle through a virtually gridlocked sea of cars inching beneath a haze of exhaust fumes.

Welcome to Mexico City in 2007. With car ownership more than doubling over the last decade, the megalopolis once dubbed the world's most polluted city should by now be almost uninhabitable, its residents gasping through oxygen masks.

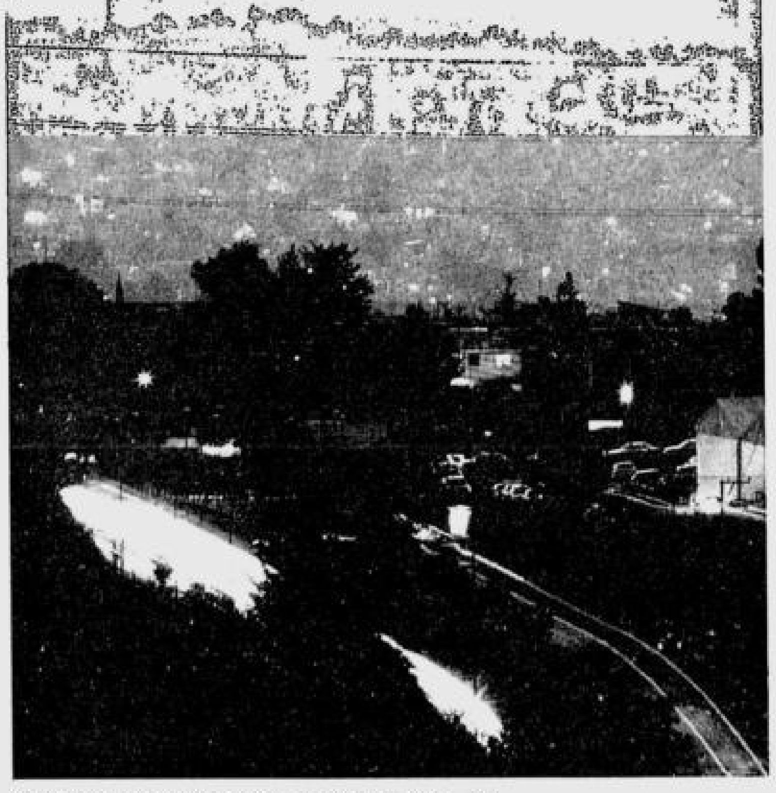
The air doesn't exactly smell sweet. But look up beyond the tops of office buildings these days and the sky is blue.

Over the past decade Mexico City has rid its streets of the most polluting cars and bounced back from the dark days of the 1980s and 1990s, when children painted the sky as black or brown and opaque air sent choking birds plummeting to the ground.

Now, for a couple of days most months, the snow-capped volcanoes that serve as a dramatic backdrop to the city are visible—after decades of being blanketed by yellow smog.

"Things have changed," said José Luis Perez, 70, who has spent 50 years selling newspapers in the ever-more congested city center. "With the new cars and regulations, Mexicans don't pollute like they used to." Air pollution earned Mexico City a place on a list of the world's 35 worst polluted places last year, but it escaped the top 10. (For the Blacksmith Institute's top 10, see "Factbox-World's 10 most polluted places.")

Nobel prize-winning Mexican chemist Mario Molina points out that the city's ozone levels are still higher than Los Angeles and Houston, the smoggiest US cities.



MEXICO City in the early morning of Jan. 18.

But gone are the regular smog emergencies of the 1990s when cars were temporarily banned from the streets and children kept inside until the air cleared.

"Pollution is much better than in the 1990s and much better than Los Angeles in the 1960s. There you were choking, your eyes would get watery and you could smell it," said Molina.

Tight emissions rules and better fuel have helped, scientists say, but perhaps the biggest change came through a credit boom during the 6-year term of former President Vicente Fox, who left office in December.

With unprecedented access to cheaper cash, Mexico City residents rushed out and bought new cars with fuel injection systems and catalytic converters, which emit up to 20 times less pollutants than older models.

Around four million cars are known to circulate in central Mexico City, up from about 1.5 million in 1996, according to industry statistics.

"Even though there are more vehicles circulating, the percentage of old, rundown cars has gradually dropped," said José Agustin Garcia, a pollution researcher at Mexico's Unam university.

But Garcia, who still develops a hacking cough in the months he takes to the streets to do field work, warns that with larger, gas-guzzling models helping clog the city, the positive impact of cleaner motors could be outweighed.

"Our studies say things are going to get worse in the future," he said. "The trend toward 4x4 cars used to take kids to school counteracts the benefit of catalytic converters."

Both Molina and Garcia say more needs to be spent on public transport—the metro is efficient but does not reach new areas of the sprawling city and the buses are chaotic.

One area worrying the scientists is the level of fine particulate matter in the air—suspended particles of solids like dirt, soil, dust, pollens, molds, ashes and soot.

Diesel smoke from old trucks, still underregulated in Mexico, is one of the main sources of particulates, which can cause chronic bronchitis and asthma.

Mexico tracks some particulates, but not the finest ones, which World Health Organization studies say can enter the bloodstream and cause heart problems.

A recent Mexican study said unregulated fine particle levels in Mexico frequently exceeded ranges considered acceptable in Los Angeles. *Reuters*

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Republic of the Philippines
CITY OF BAIS
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The City Government of Bais invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of the hereunder requirements:

ITEM	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)
PR # 35-07 – Various const. & electrical equipment & materials for improvement of lighting system at strategic locations at the city proper, to be taken from 20% Development Fund	P 2,673,875.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

In order to qualify, bidders should conform to the eligibility criteria as prescribed under Section 23.11 of the IRR-A of RA 9184

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184. As such non-submission of the required documents will result in the disqualification of the bidder

All other particulars relative to the procurement process shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

Bid documents can be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee equivalent to the total amount of the ABC of the items in which interested bidders intend to bid, in accordance with the following rates:

Below P50,000.00	– 0.5% but not less than P100.00
P50,000.00 but not more than P100,000.00	– 0.45% but not less than P250.00
P100,001.00 but not more than P200,000.00	– 0.4% but not less than P450.00
P200,001.00 – P350,000.00	– 0.35% but not less than P800.00
P350,001.00 – P500,000.00	– 0.3% but not less than P1,225.00
P500,001.00 – P1,000,000.00	– 0.2% but not less than P1,500.00
P1,000,001.00 and above	– 0.1% but not less than P2,000.00 and not more than P10,000.00

Bid documents can be obtained at the BAC Secretariat c/o Office of the City Mayor or Office of the City General Services, this city, Tel. Nos. (035) 402-3182, or 402-8115, anytime during office hours; and can also be inquired for further information or particulars.

Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **February 2, 2007 at 1:30 p.m.** at the Conference Room, Office of the City Mayor

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished eligibility, technical, and financial documents each in separate sealed envelopes duly marked as such in the bid box at the Conference Room at the Office of the City Mayor on **February 13, 2007 at 1:30 p.m.** at which place, date and time said envelopes shall be opened in the presence of the members of the BAC, the attending bidders, the observers, or their duly authorized representative. Late bids shall not be accepted.

The City Government of Bais reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to contract award without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders

(Sgd.) CARMELINO L. MORALES
(City General Services Officer)
BAC Chairman

(PDI Jan 25 & 30 2007)

US, Iraqi forces kill 300 Iraq militants

NAJAF, IRAQ—US AND IRAQI FORCES KILLED some 300 gunmen from an apocalyptic Muslim cult in a day-long battle involving US tanks and aircraft near the Shiite holy city of Najaf, Iraqi police, army and political sources said.

The US military said on Monday it was an ongoing operation so it could not provide any details.

An Iraqi army source said US forces took control of the operation on Sunday and bombing continued in the area until well after dawn on Monday, which was the climax of Ashura, the high point of the Shiite religious calendar.

Two Americans were killed, the US military said on Sunday, when an attack helicopter went down during the battle that was one of the strangest incidents of the 4-year conflict. Iraqi officials said the helicopter seemed to have been shot down.

Police Colonel Ali Nomas said 300 to 350 gunmen had been killed in the operation and dozens more arrested. Three Iraqi soldiers were killed and six more missing, and five policemen were killed. Another 40 Iraqi police and soldiers were wounded.

According to one Iraqi political source, hundreds of fighters, drawn from both Sunni and Shiite communities, fought throughout Sunday and late into the night.

A Reuters reporter at the scene, 160 km south of Baghdad, saw US tanks and heard blasts after dark on Sunday and an Iraqi officer said F-16 jets were bombing the area.

Details of the day's fighting were sketchy and the origins of the fighters unclear. An Iraqi army source said some of the dead wore headbands declaring themselves a "Soldier of Heaven."

The political source said up to 1,000 fighters had been involved. An Iraqi army source said they wore camouflage and appeared well-organized.

The US military officially handed over responsibility for Najaf province to Iraqi security forces last month, withdrawing most US troops, to be recalled only to help in emergencies.

Najaf Gov. Asaad Abu Gilel told Reuters the authorities had uncovered a plot to kill leading Shiite clerics in Najaf on Monday, to coincide with the climax of Ashura, the annual Shiite rite marking a seventh-century battle which entrenched the schism between Shiite and Sunni Islam.

"There is a conspiracy to kill the clergy on the 10th day of Muharram," he said, referring to Monday by the Muslim calendar.

Initially on Sunday the Najaf governor described the fighters as Sunnis, the majority in the Arab world and the once dominant minority in Iraq, where Shiites have been in the ascendant since the US invasion of 2003.

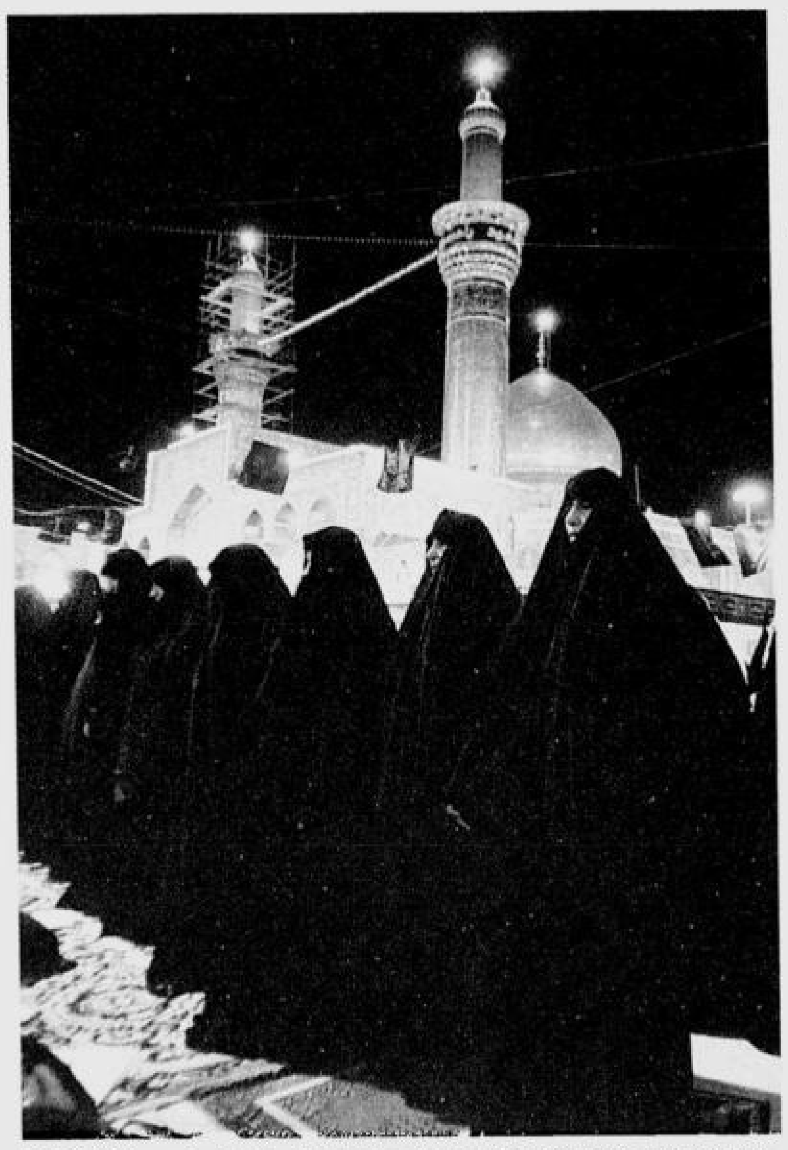
The two sects are embroiled in conflict in Iraq that many fear is descending into all-out civil war.

But political and security sources said they were followers of Ahmed Hassani al-Yemeni and described him as an apocalyptic cult leader claiming to be the vanguard of the Mahdi—a messiah-like figure in Islam whose coming heralds the start of perfect world justice. He had been operating from an office in Najaf until it was raided and closed down earlier this month.

Similar violent cults have been a feature of Islamic history. They have declared temporal Muslim leaders illegitimate infidels and have drawn followers from both Sunni and Shiite believers, proclaiming a unity of inspiration from Muhammad.

Among other violent instances associated with proclamations of the coming of the Mahdi were opposition to British rule in Sudan in the 1880s and the siege of the Grand Mosque at Mecca in 1979, when hundreds of men occupied Islam's holiest site.

Up to 1.5 millions pilgrims gathered in Kerbala, 70 km north of Najaf, to mark Ashura—the death in battle of Muhammad's grandson in 680, which confirmed the split in Islam between rival claimants to the Prophet's inheritance. *Reuters*


PILGRIMS pray inside the holy shrine of Imam Hussein during Muharram, an important period of mourning for Shiites in Karbala, Iraq, Jan. 28. AP

Karzai offers talks with Taliban

KABUL—AFGHAN PRESIDENT Hamid Karzai on Monday offered peace talks with a resurgent Taliban after the bloodiest year since the hardline Islamists were ousted in 2001 and amid warnings of a violent spring offensive.

More than 4,000 people, including about 170 foreign soldiers, died in fighting last year, a year that saw a dramatic jump in suicide bombings as the Taliban and other militants copy tactics from insurgents in Iraq.

Karzai made the offer while speaking at a religious gathering in Kabul on one of the holiest days of the Shia Islamic calendar, but he did not specifically name the Taliban.

Karzai also said he prayed for the "guidance" of those who plotted against Afghanistan, referring to neighboring Pakistan where the Taliban and their Islamic allies have sanctuaries.

Karzai two years ago offered amnesty to those Taliban he and others regard as moderate, but on Monday made no such distinction.

The Taliban have vowed to drive out foreign troops and overthrow Karzai and his government. *Reuters*

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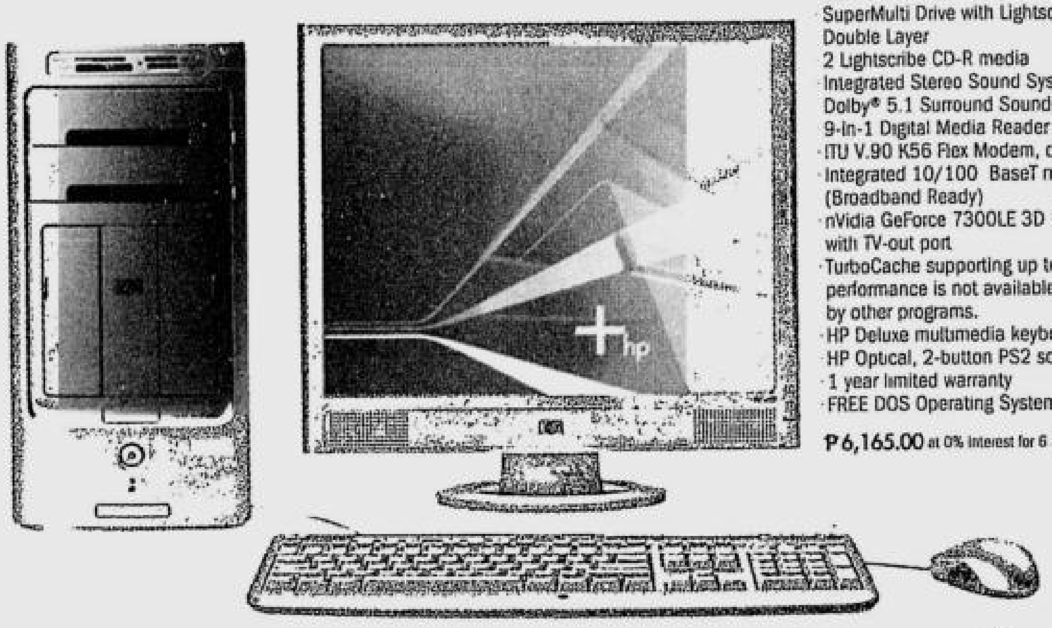

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 0191, Series of 2007

Irrepressible ministers give Japan PM headaches

TOKYO—FIRST, HIS DEFENSE minister risks offending Japan's key ally, the United States, by calling the start of the Iraq war a "mistake."

Then, his health minister sparks a domestic fuss by calling women "birth-giving machines."

Gaffes by Cabinet ministers are giving Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe a political headache when his support ratings are already slipping due to doubts about his leadership ability—hardly cheering ahead of an upper house election in July.

"I want to make clear that our Cabinet is not allowing people to just say what they want," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki told a news conference on Monday at which he was bombarded with questions about the comments by the two ministers.

Abe came under fire when he took office in September for creating a "crony Cabinet" of lawmakers who had supported his bid to become prime minister. Now, some critics say his choices are coming back to haunt him.

"These people are not media savvy. They are feudal warlords who voice their frank opinions," said Jesper Koll, chief economist at Merrill Lynch in Tokyo. "He put them in the Cabinet... and now he's stuck with them."

Abe told parliament he had given a strong warning to Health Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa about his "inappropriate" phrase, and Yanagisawa himself apologized for "hurting women's feelings."

Yanagisawa, 71, had been speaking to local lawmakers about Japan's rock-bottom birth rate, which has raised concerns about economic growth and the ability to fund ballooning pension costs.

"Because the number of birth-giving machines and devices is fixed, all we can ask for is for them to do their best per head, although it may not be so appropriate to call them machines," Kyodo quoted Yanagisawa as saying.

Shiozaki was also grilled about the latest controversial remarks by Defence Minister Fumio Kyuma, who last week said US President George W. Bush had been wrong to start the Iraq war on the assumption that Baghdad had nuclear weapons.

Kyuma was quoted as saying on Saturday that Washington didn't understand the need for "spadework" to win approval from the governor of Okinawa to relocate a US military base on the southern Japanese island in line with a US-Japan agreement.

"I am telling (the US side) not to say such patronizing things, that I am talking to the governor, so please wait a bit and leave Japanese matters to Japan," Kyuma was quoted as saying.

Shiozaki acknowledged that US officials had contacted Japanese authorities to check on Kyuma's comments about the Iraq war, but added there had not been any criticism. *Reuters*

JAPANESE Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (right) chats with Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma Jan. 29. AFP

Drinking recycled sewage

SYDNEY—AUSTRALIA'S PRIME minister on Monday hailed a move to force the citizens of a drought-parched region to drink recycled sewage as the way forward for the rest of the world's driest inhabited continent.

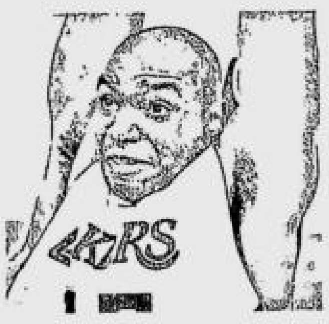
John Howard praised Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, who on Sunday announced that residents in the state's tinder-dry southeast would be drinking recycled waste water as early as next year, whether they liked it or not.

Beattie said record low inflows to dams had left his government with no alternative but to dump plans for a public referendum on the issue intended for March.

"The reality is at the moment we have no choice, we have to provide people with water," he said.

"It's not like we are part of a freak show—the rest of the world is doing this," he said, referring to residents in Singapore, London, Washington and southern California, whom he said drank recycled water.

Much of Australia is enduring the worst drought in a century. *AFP*



WHAT'S INSIDE

Suns stretch NBA win streak to 17 /A26

SPORTS

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Woods spells relevance of 7th straight triumph /A26

FACE-OFF: Danny Ildefonso and Rico Villanueva confront each other at mid-court.
AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Fiery Ildefonso faces suspension

GAMES TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:35 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs. Talk 'N Text
7:20 p.m.—Red Bull vs. San Miguel Beer

By Musong R. Castillo

TOSSED OUT OF GAME 3 SUNDAY NIGHT, San Miguel Beer center Danny Ildefonso faces suspension and could miss tomorrow's Game 4 of the San Miguel-Red Bull Final Four series in the Talk 'N Text-PBA Philippine Cup.

Ildefonso, who was ejected with still 8:44 to go after a face-off with Red Bull counterpart Enrico Villanueva at midcourt in Sunday's Game 3 at the Araneta Coliseum, appeared before league officials yesterday to explain his side of the incident.

Villanueva, teammate Junthy Villanueva and others who incurred the five other technical fouls in the game will follow suit today and tomorrow.

Regardless of the verdict on Ildefonso, the two-time MVP will enjoy the full support of San Miguel Beer coach Chot Reyes.

"I told the players that they better be ready to dish it and take it," said Reyes, moments after a 109-82 thumping of the Barako and a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series. "*Matira na lang ang matibay* (Let's see who's the tougher team)."

Reyes said he would accept it if Ildefonso, who scored 16 points in Game 3, is suspended for the next game after incurring two technical fouls. League officials, though, said an ejection—because of technical fouls—does not merit an automatic suspension.

"If that's the prize we have to pay, we'll take it," Reyes declared. "We'll just have to find other ways to win. The important thing is for us not to back down, not to be intimidated."

Red Bull mentor Yeng Guiao, though, was unfazed when told of Reyes' comments—as well as the deficit staring him in the face.

"We've been in worse situations," Guiao said. "This was a big game, but not bigger than the next one (Game 4 tomorrow). (What Reyes said) should only motivate us to come out harder."

While acknowledging that his foes are not dirty players, Reyes concedes that the only way to play—and beat—Red Bull, is through the Barako's own physical brand of game.

"To them (Reyes and the Beermen), it might matter," Guiao said. "But for us, it's our natural style of play."

San Miguel literally came out hard, answering every hard bump with one that was harder, as tempers flared and action halted on several occasions because of player confrontations.

"We like it better that (physical) way," Villanueva told the Inquirer while still inside the locker room after the game. "The fans will see just how tough Red Bull is."

SBP hopes to get Fiba nod in March

By June Navarro

THE SAMAHANG BASKETBOL ng Pilipinas hopes to officially secure accreditation from the International Basketball Federation when Fiba holds its central board meeting on March 2 in Thailand.

VARGAS

PBA chair Ricky Vargas, one of the prime movers of the SBP, said the new cage body is ready to form the national team after the election of officers during the Unity Congress set on Feb. 5 at the Dusit Hotel in Makati City.

The two requirements would complete the terms of the Fiba-endorsed communique signed last year in Tokyo by representatives of the Basketball Association of the Philippines and Pilipinas Basketball to unite the sport under a new cage body.

But whether the unification process would proceed smoothly hinges on a crucial meeting last night by the new leadership of the BAP to decide whether it would attend the Unity Congress.

New BAP president Go Teng Kok, who presided over the meeting which was going at presstime, said any decision would be announced today.

Vargas said SBP wants to start the formation of the national team immediately after the Unity Congress to complete the requirements of the communique, in time for a key Fiba meting in Thailand.

SBP officials, led by tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan, PBA commissioner Noli Eala and Vargas, plan to ask national coach Chot Reyes to present his program for the national team made up of PBA stars any time soon.

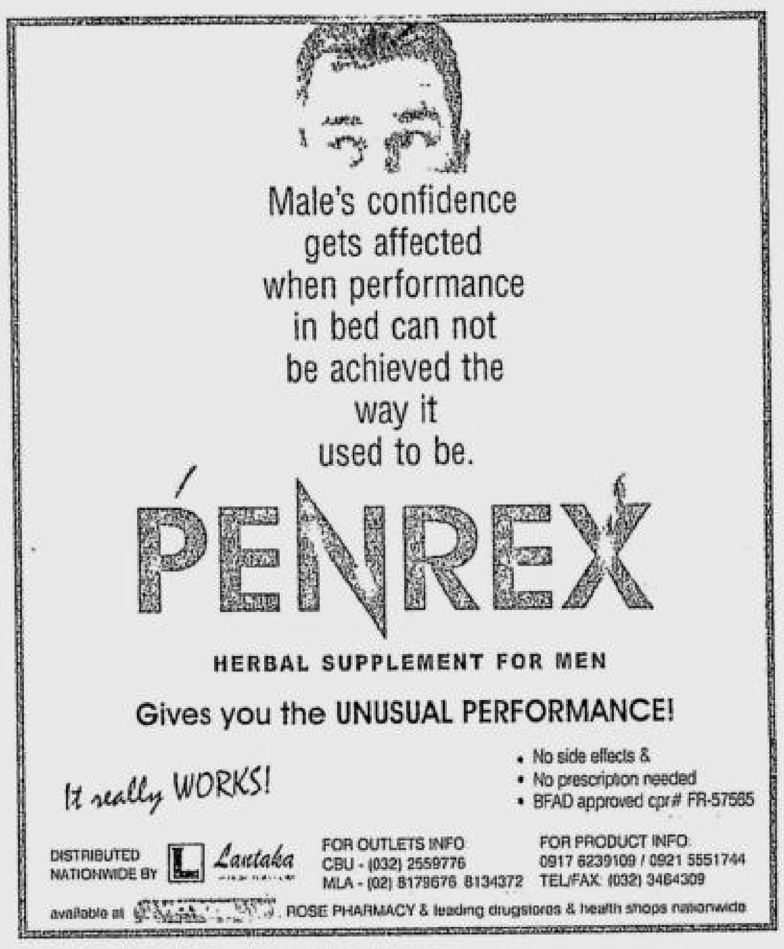
"The target is to play in the Olympics," said Vargas. "We're now working toward that goal by trying to get the national team in the Seaba and hopefully, in the Fiba-Asia championships."

The Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships, slated in April, is the qualifier for the Asian Championships in July in Saitama, Japan. The top two finishers in the Asian tourney will gain automatic slots to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

SBP officials feel failure to compete in the qualifying tournaments would derail the unity efforts and shelve the formation of a potentially strong national squad altogether.

"We have a strong team and we don't want to miss the opportunity," said Reyes.

"It's easy to say that the 10 teams in the PBA would be asked to sacrifice for the national team," said Vargas. "But it's a difficult thing to do."



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Peñalosa in undercard of Barrera-Marquez

PEÑALOSA: Roach convinced him.

By Salven L. Lagumbay, Contributor

FORMER WORLD CHAMPION GERRY PEñalosa has accepted an offer to fight World Boxing Organization (WBO) super bantamweight champion Daniel Ponce De Leon on March 17 as the chief support to the Marco Antonio Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez showdown at the MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

The matchup pits southpaws and heavy-handed fighters. Peñalosa totes a record of 51 wins against five defeats and two draws with 34 KOs, while Ponce De Leon is 30-1 with 28 KOs.

Their clash is part of the pay-per-view telecast of the card dubbed "Fearless" by promoter Oscar De la Hoya.

In an interview yesterday, Peñalosa said he would fly to Los Angeles alone on Sunday to sign the fight contract with Ponce De Leon. He would then continue his training at the Wild Card gym of trainer-manager Freddie Roach.

Set to follow him are his brother-trainer Jonathan and boxer Michael Farenas, who is also hoping for a slot in the card. Both are still working to obtain their United States visa.

The 34-year-old Peñalosa has been training at his home gym in Parañaque and sparring against Farenas, a top-ranked featherweight, and a boxer named Alco.

Peñalosa also said De la Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions will formally announce his fight with Ponce de Leon as soon he signs the contract.

Roach had earlier asked Peñalosa to take on Ponce De Leon, saying that the latter cannot win against the Filipino's style.

Ponce De Leon has campaigned extensively in the 122-lb division and is bigger than Peñalosa, the former World Boxing Council (WBC) flyweight champion who is comfortable in the 118-lb division.

"I have consulted my former managers Antonio Aldeguer and Rudy Salud, and they both said I should not take the fight because Ponce De Leon is too big," said Peñalosa.

"But I have to make a final decision. I have decided to fight him because I'm not getting any younger, and I know that I can beat him."

Peñalosa said he is aware that Ponce De Leon does not run from a fight and is dangerous with his unorthodox style.

Sealers, Comets seek last semifinal berth

HENKEL SISTA TRIES TO REPEAT OVER MAIL AND More today in their playoff for the fourth and last semifinal berth of the PBL Silver Cup at the Olivarez College Sports Center in Parañaque.

GAME TODAY
(*Olivarez College Sports Center*)
3 p.m.—Henkel Sista vs Mail and More

The Super Sealers and the Comets collide at 3 p.m. with the winner forging a Final Four duel against Hapee-PCU.

Momentum is with Henkel Sista following its 79-72 triumph over Mail and More last week as the Super Sealers did a masterful job of limiting Comets big man JR Quiñahan to only seven points.

"We need consistency," said Sista coach Caloy Garcia. "We have to play four good quarters to beat Mail and More again."

But the Comets, who stayed alive because they enjoyed a twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals, are expected to fight with renewed purpose as Mail and More coach Lawrence Chongson returns after missing last Saturday's game due to a prior commitment.

"We have to match their intensity," said Chongson. "We fell short (in the last game), but I'm still positive we can beat them."

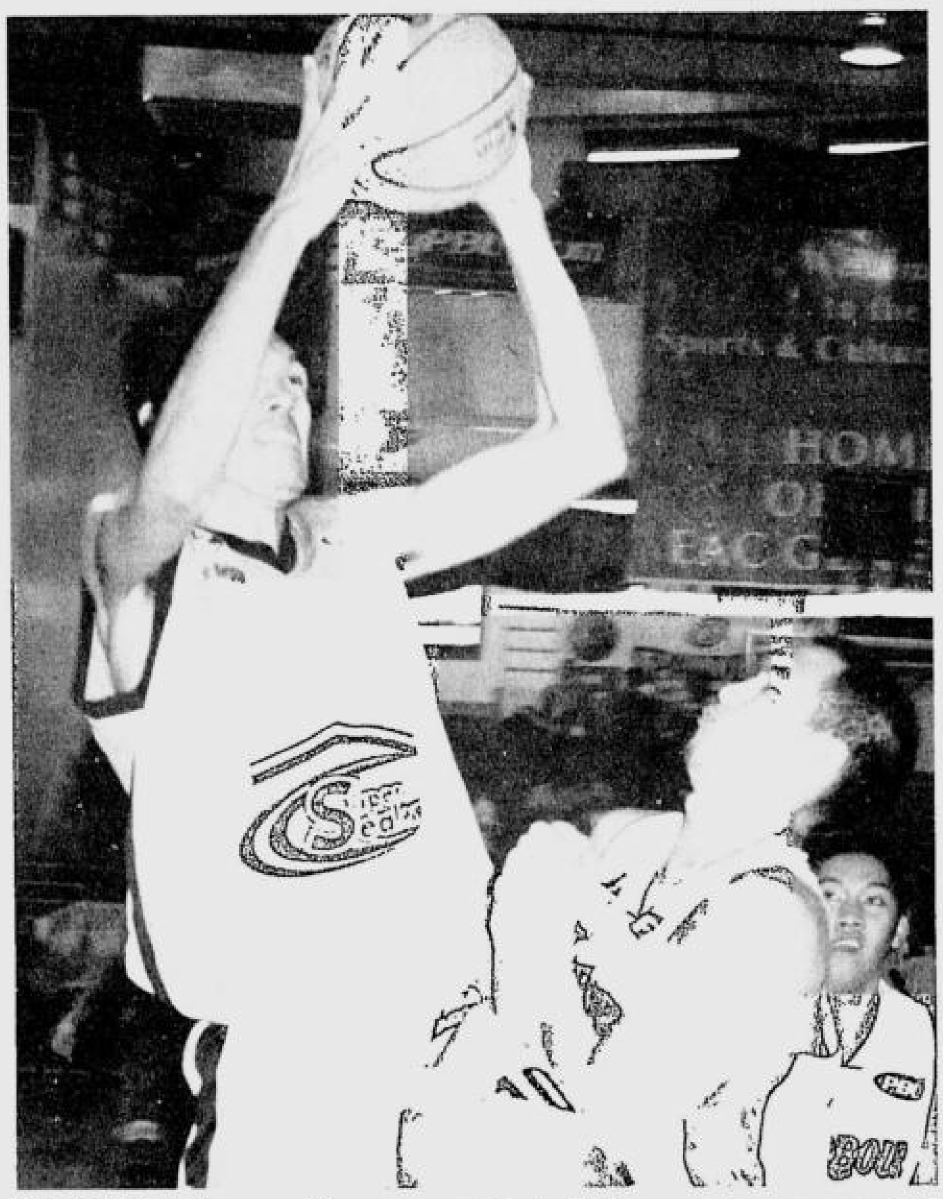
Mike Bravo, Ronjay Buenafe and Elmer Espiritu are also expected to help avert an untimely exit for the Comets, who had a sensational 7-3 run highlighted by a six-game winning streak in the classification round.

The Sealers are fighting for survival for the third straight time, having earlier slipped past Magnolia Ice Cream in the second knockout phase via a 66-61 triumph.

"I've been telling the players even before we played Magnolia that every game will be important," said Garcia. "One loss and we're out, but the players are determined that we can do it."

The other semifinal pairing was completed last Saturday with Harbour Centre ousting TeleTech in overtime to seal another encounter with Toyota Otis.

Jasmine W. Payo


HENKEL Sista's Lawrence Bonus powers to the basket in a recent game. ERIK ARAZAS

SOUTHERN LADIES

SK teener back to defend crown

A CRACK LOCAL FIELD THAT INcludes members of the national squad stands in the way when South Korea's Crystal Shin guns for a second straight victory in the Southern Ladies golf tournament which fires off Feb. 7 at the Iloilo Golf and Country Club in Iloilo.

The 15-year-old Korean shotmaker, who romped away with the crown last year in Del Monte, has confirmed her participation in the event whose 44th staging coincides with IGCCs grand celebration of its centennial year.

Out to foil Shin's back-to-back title bid are Junior World champions Dottie Ardina and Cyna Rodriguez, Mia Piccio and Crystal Superal, Regina de Guzman and reigning national amateur champion and former RP Ladies Open titlist Carmelette Villaroman.

The event, to be conducted by the National Golf Association of the Philippines, has lured 25 teams.

The squads competing come from Wack Wack, Mt. Malarayat, Alabang, Riviera, Cebu Country Club, Club Filipino Cebu, Alta Vista, Sta. Elena, Forest Hills, Bacolod, Tagaytay Highlands, Victorias Golf, Del Monte, Iligan Golf, Pueblo de Oro GCC, Southwoods, Pamplona GCC, Victorias, Negros Occidental GCC, Canlubang and host Iloilo.

Aside from the premier Championship flight, other divisions on tap are Classes A, B, C and D and the seniors category (55 and above).

Open to players with certified handicaps or handicap indices, the individual event will use the Molave scoring system.

Also on tap are the team and seniors tournaments slated in the first two days using the Stableford scoring format.

The traditional Lam-Am tournament will be held on Feb. 6.

The Ladies Chapter of the host club, headed by Chit Querubin, has assured participants of a pleasant stay in Iloilo.

Registration is ongoing with the fee pegged at P1,800. Deadline for listing is Feb. 5. *With a report from Musong R. Castillo*

PBA taps veteran Fiba ref

THE PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL Association (PBA) has tapped the services of a long-time Fiba (Federation Internationale de Basketball) referee to lend his expertise to Asia's first professional league.

Fiba clinic director Alan Richardson will be coming over at the end of the ongoing Talk 'N Text-Philippine Cup to serve as PBA technical consultant for a month.

League commissioner Noli Eala said the hiring of the legendary British referee underscores the PBA's efforts to raising league officiating a notch higher.

"This is our way of further improving the technical skills of league officials and the officiating," said Eala.

"The PBA puts premium on self improvement and control."

Lady Tams stop UST volleybelles

By Jasmine W. Payo

VOLLEYBALL GAMES WEDNESDAY
(*Blue Eagle Gym*)
2 p.m.—UE vs UST (W)
3 p.m.—Adamson vs FEU (W)
4 p.m.—Ateneo vs NU (W)

FAR EASTERN U ENDED THE NINE-GAME winning run of powerhouse University of Santo Tomas in the UAAP volleyball tournament with a 22-25, 25-18, 25-14, 14-25, 15-13 victory Sunday night at the Blue Eagle Gym in Katipunan.

Led by Mary Ann Manalo, the Lady Tamaraws caught up with the Tigresses at the top with a 9-1 record to claim the remaining twice-to-beat advantage in the Final Four.

Manalo scored 18 points highlighted by 14 kills and three aces. Rachel Anne Daquis, who led the FEU attack in the second and third frames, also pounced on UST's anemic reception to also finish with 18 points.

"We had a faster rotation and we gave importance to our service," said FEU coach Joseph Santos.

University of the East earlier boosted its bid for the last Final Four slot by outclassing University of the Philippines in straight sets, 25-20, 25-21, 25-21.

Suzanne Roces had 16 markers, including three aces and two blocks, to lead UE to at least a playoff for the fourth spot.

"I'm happy with the way the girls played, especially in the preparation of their plays," said coach Jess Reyes after UE notched its fifth win in 10 games.

The Lady Maroons slipped to 3-8 and dropped out of semifinal contention.

Rare Olympic shot for RP Blu Girls

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE ROAD TO THE BEIJING Olympics may be a bumpy one but the RP Blu Girls are determined to make the most out of the rare opportunity to crash the world stage once again.

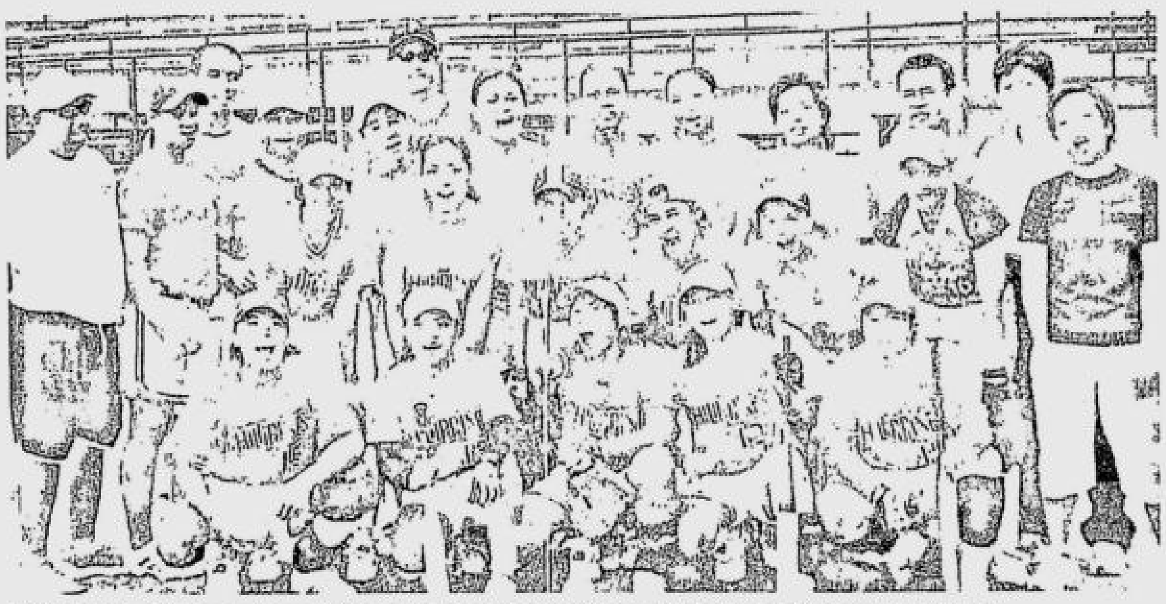
Heidilyn Arca, who pitched the national team to the 2005 Southeast Asian Games gold medal, will banner the Blu Girls in the Asia-Oceania Olympic qualifier on Feb. 1-7 at the Tainan Municipal Softball Stadium in Chinese Taipei.

Aside from the host country, New Zealand, North Korea, South Korea and Singapore are also seeking the lone Olympic slot at stake in the qualifier.

"It would be an honor if our Blu Girls make it to Beijing," said Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines president Jean Henri Lhuillier. "The task at hand is tough but I think the girls are prepared."

The Blu Girls ranked as high as No. 4 in the world in the 1970s and, though Japan, China and Chinese Taipei have since emerged as the top Asian teams, they remained untouchable in Southeast Asia.

Arca, who hails from Tanza, Cavite, is hands down the most prolific pitcher on the roster as star of University of Santos Tomas.


THE RP Blu Girls take time off from their hectic practice session to pose for a souvenir shot.

Backing her up are fellow UST pitcher Esmeralda Tayag, Bukidnon pitcher Corazon Soberre, University of the Philippines pitcher-catcher Dione Macasu, La Salle shortstop Elaine Caladiao-Bacarisas and outfielder Belen Ramirez Asok.

Veterans Babette Ramos, Joy Lasquete, Heide Bonggas, Gina Salvador, Nimfa Baral, Janet Vallite, and Nelia Lara are also in the team with rookies Loulou Maganda, Ayesa Arceo, Karen Aribal and Joy Daquiado.

The team will miss the services of some of the country's finest players like pitcher Cloyne Muyco and second basewoman Sherilyn Valenzuela, who are identified with another faction in the sport.

Former Blu Girls star Aleli Nabong is the coach. Assisting her are Francis Diaz and Ronelon Pagkaliwagan.

The Blu Girls face Singapore in the morning and South Korea in the afternoon on Feb. 1.

"We are confident against Singapore and South Korea," said Nabong. "They will serve as our warmup games for the tougher schedules ahead."

The Taiwanese placed second in the recent Doha Asiad behind Japan. China was third followed by North Korea and South Korea.

SPORTSWATCH

First tri-media badminton backed

THE FIRST NATIONAL PRESS CLUB (NPC) TRI-MEDIA BADMINTON TOURnament fires off on Feb. 3 at the Rizal Memorial Badminton Center with Unilever Phils. and Toby's Sports as major backers. NPC president Roy Mabasa said free registration for the tournament, aimed at promoting camaraderie among shuttlers from the different publications and radio and television networks, is still open. Teams can field six players who will compete in men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles. Current and former members of the national badminton pool and players from collegiate leagues are not allowed to play. For inquiries, call the NPC secretariat at 301-0521 to 22 or tournament coordinator Edwin Rollon at 0906-3707761.

P3-M 'Away-Kalipay sa Talisay' Feb. 19

MULTITITLED GAMEFOWL BREEDER SONNY LAGON AND PROMINENT Cebu cockers Robert Yu and Ricoh Masucol will stage the first "Away-Kalipay sa Talisay" 6-Cock Derby, which promises to be one of the most prestigious cockfighting events ever in Cebu, on Feb. 19-24 at the New Talisay Tourist and Sports Complex in Talisay City. At stake is a guaranteed cash prize of at least P3 million for an entry fee of P18,000. The champion handler and gaffer will receive P150,000 and P50,000, respectively, in the derby sponsored by Thunderbird Power Feeds. Four Blue Blade trios, one for each elimination day, will be raffled off. The Thunderbird Championship Ring will be awarded to the winner. The first 60 entries will figure in a 3-cock elimination on Feb. 19.

World champ joins Makati int'l derby

THE LIST OF COMBATANTS IN THE FIRST MAKATI 8-COCK INTERNATIONal Derby, slated Feb. 5, 7 and 9 at Makati Coliseum, gets tougher with the confirmed participation of reigning World Slasher Cup champion Jen jen Arayata. Arayata, son of former Cavite mayor Ashley Arayata, will field two entries in a bid to extend an incredible winning run that started in last year's National Bakbakan 9-stag derby. After bagging the "Bakbakan" title with an unblemished record of 9 wins, Arayata then clinched the World Slasher Cup with seven wins and one defeat. Hosts Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co of the WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. said the guaranteed prize may go up due to the last-minute participation of visiting cockers from the United States.

400 vie in Roligon anniversary 6-cocker

THE GRAND SHOWDOWN OF 400 COCKERS AND BREEDERS FROM METRO Manila and the provinces begins at 1 p.m. today in the RMC 17th Anniversary 6-Cock Derby at Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque. Today's 2-cock elimination round of the derby sponsored by Lakpue Drug Inc. and Thunderbird Enertone will feature the first 150 competitors, said host Rolly Ligon. The guaranteed prize is P4 million and the entry fee P11,000. Bulacan's Ed Patawaran and Davao's James Uy, who ruled last year's 429-entry derby, head the long list of partipants. The second and third elimination rounds kick off on Thursday and Saturday, with the semifinals slated on Feb. 5 and the finals on Feb. 7.

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Qrt/Tri)—Swiss Alps (2), Royal Heiress (1), Lady Thunder/La Truena (5), Violeta's Secret (6)

Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Gonfalon Story (8), House of Riches (7), Divine Diva (4), Concorde (1), Harry Peak/Golden Harry (3)

Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—All Class (4), Canta Libre (6), Loaded (5), Mucho Macho (3)

Race 4—(Tri)—Air Force One (3), Ocean Deep (5), Man Power (2)

Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Grand Fiesta (6), Real Tough (3), Miss Vicky (9), Chabacana (2), Virgin Island (7)

Race 6—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Sharp Cookie (4), Mes Monique (8), Donna Messier (1), EJ Forever (2), Magic Key (10), Coeur D'Honneur (6)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Kambro (5), Ole! Ole! Ole! (7), Britney's Magic (4), Interceptor (9), Southern Prince (2)

Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Kate Alex (5), Cool Turner (8), Pristine Water (12), Red Phoenix (11), Detective Daryll (7), Batang Bukid (2)

School dropout 'rides' off with millions

By Musong R. Castillo

NOW living in style, millionaire jockey Jonathan B. Hernandez arrives at the Santa Ana Park. INQUIRER PHOTO/JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

HIS FIRST VICTORY CAME ABOARD Trip North nine years ago, and it may have been an ominous ride, for everything has been looking up for Jonathan B. Hernandez ever since.

A high school dropout who sneaked in "rides" inside the stables as a 15-year-old, "Uno" Hernandez now sits on top of the local horseracing world, winning more than P47 million for lucky owners from 228 victories last year. That made him the unanimous choice as top jockey for the second straight season.

With 10 percent as his standard commission, Hernandez, who idolized the hard-driving veterans Manolito Daquis and Virgilio Camanero, easily bankrolled a handsome P4.7 million last year.

"Maybe my success comes from my unique riding style," the mild-mannered 26-year-old said in Filipino during a late Thursday night talk with the INQUIRER.

Aerodynamic way

"I am the only jockey (in the country) who can ride a horse in the most aerodynamic way.

"Flat *na* flat *po ako sa ibabaw ng kabayo, eh. Halos di ko maramdaman ang hangin*."

He developed that style inside the stables, where he would proceed after skipping his second-year high school classes. There he would pretend that he was in a race while the horses were being walked inside by their grooms to warm them down after an early morning workout.

"That's when I got scolded, because more often than not, my parents would catch me there," Hernandez recounted with a laugh. "Not long after, I was dropped from my class and I never returned to school again."

He entered the jockeys' academy, then handled by former ace jockey George Stribling, soon after and graduated with the batch of 1997 along with Jeffryl T. Zarate, and Gibbs Rivera.

Hernandez, who wears several tattoos, became an apprentice rider without difficulty, booting home more than 40 winners in his required two-year "residency" period before graduating, at 17 years old, as a Class A rider, a label which he has held on to for the last nine years.

Growing up in the stables surrounding the Santa Ana Park in Makati, it was a natural decision for Uno to pursue a living as a jockey, the same jobs his father, the late Rafael Hernandez (known as jockey Sison), and his grandfather, Teodorico O. Basco, held.

"I knew that I was born to ride and make a living out of it," Hernandez, a single father to Nathan Luis, said. "I knew that I had to work hard to stand out."

His first job as a groom's assistant when he was only 15 paid him no more than P700. And that came only when the horses he "walked around" would win.

Like a PBA superstar

Then he took matters into his own hands by entering the jockeys' academy and eventually emerging as a multi-millionaire athlete, much in the mold of superstar Philippine Basketball Association players and other high-profile athletes.

"As of now, there's nothing more to ask," said Hernandez, who piloted Silver Story to a Triple Crown sweep in 2001. "I've won almost all the stakes races, except one—the Presidential Gold Cup."

"The only thing missing is the Gold Cup," he said. "And I hope I get the chance to ride Real Spicy in that race."

Real Spicy was honored with Hernandez in the recent Philippine Sportswriters Association Awards as Horse of the Year.

Gold Cup or not, a Hernandez-Real Spicy partnership would certainly be a ride to watch.

Valle makes mark in US pool circuit

VALLE: Joss winner

IT'S GANDY VALLE'S turn to create a ripple in the United States billiards circuit.

Valle, the cue star from Davao City, outthought and outplayed Kevin Guimond, 9-4, in the finals to rule the Ocean State 9-Ball Championship of the Joss NE 9-Ball Tour in Providence, Rhode Island, over the weekend.

The victory was worth $2,500 (about P125,000) for Valle, who became the first Filipino to win in the Joss Tour this year.

Valle, a double gold medalist in the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games, thus raised his total to $4,265 (about P213,000) in the young tour.

Earlier, Valle placed 11th in the Derby City Classic 9-Ball in Louisville, Kentucky, and third in the previous stop of the Joss Tour at the Comet Billiard in Parsippany, New Jersey.

The 2005 Singapore leg titlist of the SMB Asian 9-Ball Tour started the final day of the 76-player, double elimination tournament with a 9-4 victory over Joe Tucker.

Valle followed it up with a 9-2 win over Guimond in the battle for the hot seat.

United States-based Filipino Santos Sambajon had a chance to forge an all-Filipino final after topping the loser's bracket. But he lost to Guimond, 3-9, in the duel for the last finals berth.

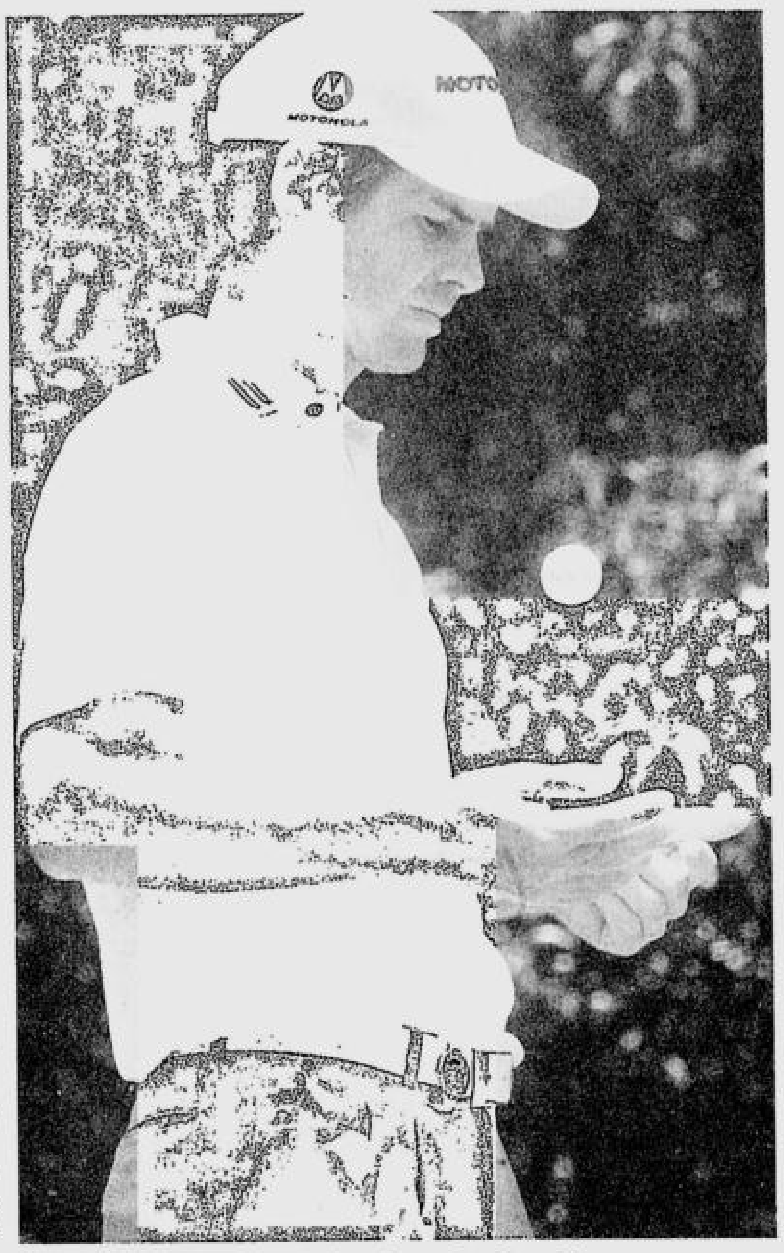
Valle reasserted his supremacy over Guimond in the finals, clustering five racks to take control from a 2-3 deficit.

Guimond earned $1,900 while Sambajon took home $1,500.

Tournament favorites Mike Zuglan, Joey Korsiak, Dave Fernandez and the world's top lady player Karen Corr failed to make it to the money round.

"Gandy (Valle) is off to a good start," said Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines head Ernie Fajardo. "He was quite silent the past year. I know he can sustain his fine showing in the US pool circuit."

Valle's best effort last year was a second-place finish behind 2004 World Pool champion Alex Pagulayan in the BSCP National Championship in Manila. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*



BACK IN THE HUNT: Defending champoion Scott Strange. RUDY ESPERAS

Open pro-am: Champ won't be a Strange-r

Crack field samples W. Wack East again

By Musong R. Castillo

DEFENDING CHAMPION SCOTT STRANGE gets to sample Wack Wack East when the pro-am event, which officially kicks off the 91st Philippine Open, tees off today.

Most of the other entries in the crack field are entered, including legendary local hope Frankie Miñoza, the 1998 winner seeing action in the tournament for the first time in four years.

A total of 30 teams, each composed of one professional and three amateur-guests, are vying for handsome cash prizes and merchandise.

Tee-off is 7:30 a.m. shotgun style, with the East course, one of the toughest layouts in Asia, expected to show its teeth this early.

Asia's oldest Open gets under way Thursday at the East layout with 156 players from 20 countries shooting for the $47,700 top prize out of the total cash pot of $300,000.

Aside from Strange and Miñoza, other top players seeing action are Anthony Kang, Andrew Pitts and Clay Devers of the United States, Thailand's Thaworn Wirachant and Chawalit Plaphol, former winner Rick Gibson of Canada, and England's Ben St. John.

Australian Adam Le Vesconte, the 2005 winner at Malarayat in Lipa City, homegrown hopes Angelo Que, Artemio Murakami, Carito Villaroman, Tony Lascuña and Asian Tour 2006 top rookie Juvic Pagunsan are also in the pro-am field.

The First Gentleman Foundation of Jose Miguel Arroyo and the International Containers and Terminal Services Inc. of Enrique Razon, San Miguel Corp., Philippine Airlines, PLDT, Smart Communications, Taise-Shimizu, Hanjin, Takenaka, JAC, Srixon, Aboitiz, 100 Plus Isotonic Sports Drink and Absolute are supporting the four-day event ending Sunday.

Cardona earns 3rd Player of Week honors

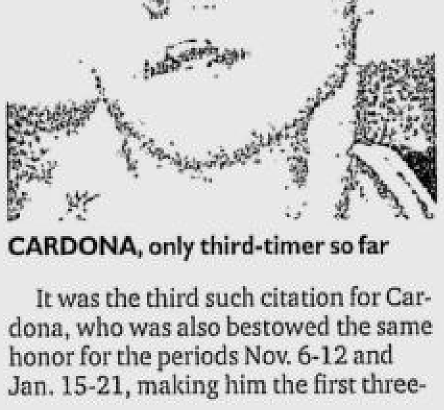
PLAYING HERO IN THE TALK 'N TEXT PBA Philippine Cup is getting to be habit for Mark Cardona.

Just two days after sinking a clutch game-winner, Cardona again shone big time, enabling the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals to make it two in a row over the Barangay Ginebra Kings in their best-of-seven semifinal showdown.

"He has really cranked his game a notch higher in the playoffs," noted TNT coach Derick Pumaren of his 6-foot-1 sophomore, who is once again named as the PBA Press Corps' Accel-TNT Player of the Week for Jan. 22-28.

Third citation

"I just hope he keeps playing this way," added Pumaren.



CARDONA, only third-timer so far

It was the third such citation for Cardona, who was also bestowed the same honor for the periods Nov. 6-12 and Jan. 15-21, making him the first three-time recipient of the award used as one of the gauges for voting the conference's Best Player.

The honor also moved the former La Salle Green Archer ahead of an elite list of two-time winners of the weekly award that includes Air21's Gary David, San Miguel Beer's Danny Seigle, Alaska's Willie Miller, and Ginebra's Mark Caguioa and Rudy Hatfield.

Game-winning trey

Cardona initially shone with a team-high 21-point shooting, capped by a clutch, game-winning three-pointer, in TNT's 99-96 win last Friday that heralded the Phone Pals' rise from a 100-115 loss in the series opener just two nights before.

Cardona also had four rebounds, two assists, two steals and a block after a measly four-point Game One performance.

Meeting the challenge

The follow-up came last Sunday when the 25-year-old former PBL MVP scattered 18 points in the second half and helped TNT score a 109-100 win that gave the team a 2-1 lead in the duel.

Cardona started flat but picked up his game in the second half with 13 points in the third period while meeting the challenge of the very potent Caguioa head-on.

Cardona had the last laugh in the head-to-head as the Barangay Ginebra star could only fire blanks in the fourth canto.

Fiery Aguilar shows who's boss

AGUILAR: Two wins

MULTITITLED INTERNAtionalist Glen Aguilar bagged the two premier crowns Sunday in the first Mayor Freddie Tinga Cup Motocross at the newly built Fast Track Motorsports Park in Upper Bicutan, Taguig City.

Aguilar, the first Asian Motocross champion in 2004, handily won the Pro Open and Pro 125 races over Kenneth San Andres.

Jerry Beech placed third while Donard Yuzon and Kenneth Balleza wound up fourth and fifth, respectively, in both events.

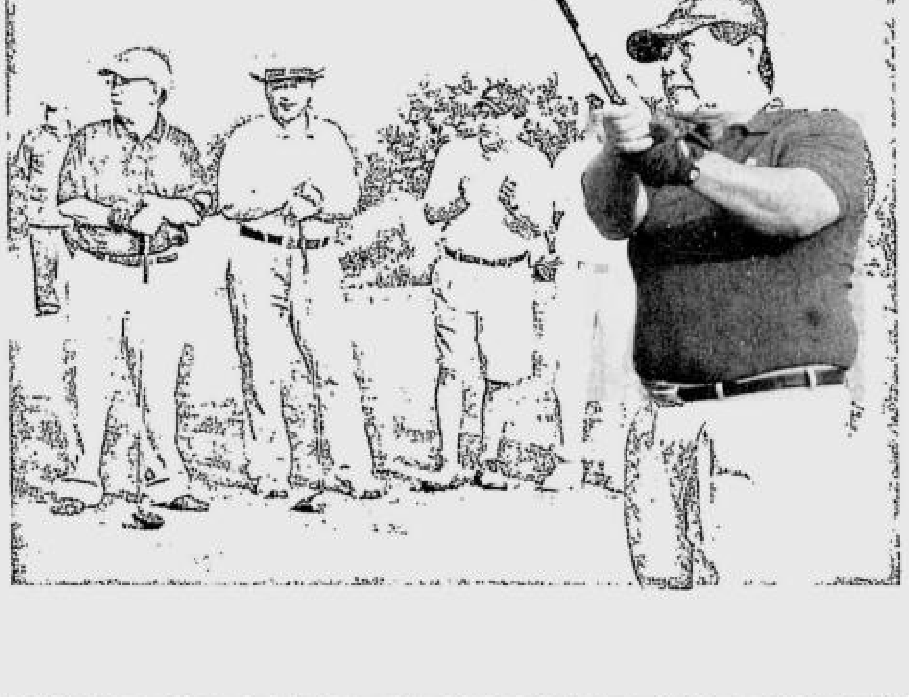
Rafael "Raf Raf" Enriquez topped the Junior 65 division after an exciting showdown with Jerick Mitra, who won the first race before the eventual champion asserted himself in their second meeting.

Joey Aycardo took third while Jacob Orbe and TJ Alberto ended fourth and fifth, respectively.

Jenzen Manuel bagged the Junior 85 plum over Jan Carlo Rellosa and Nac Mac Garcia Lorenzo while TJ Alberto won the Peewee 50 class over Joey Aycardo and McLean Aguilar.

The other winners were Joebanie Leyva (Intermediate), Mario Nino Garcia (Novice Open Production), Gino Memije (Beginner Open Production), Jun Jun San Andres (Veterans), Nani Pazcoguin (Executive), Gerald Fronda (Novice Local Enduro), Vrix Manalo (Local Enduro Open) and Jason Sarmiento (Underbone).

The event, sanctioned by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association and promoted by Xtreme Worx Philippines, also served as the riders' tune-up for the upcoming 2007 season of the FIM Asian Motocross Championship Series Tour, which starts on March 4 in Puerto Princesa City.



FIRST DRIVE
National Golf Association of the Philippines president and Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza hits one of the ceremonial drives kicking off the first Ambassador Golf Tournament at the Sherwoods Hills Golf Club in Trece Martires, Cavite. In the background are Philippine Ambassador to the United States Willie Gaa and retired general Edgardo Aglipay. The tournament, held for the benefit of the Gawad Kalinga Foundation, seeks to promote the country as a golf destination.

Suns stretch NBA win streak to 17

Finley lifts Spurs past Lakers

CLEVELAND—THE PHOENIX SUNS won their 17th consecutive game with a 115-100 road win over the Cleveland Cavaliers to tie the seventh-longest winning streak in NBA history.

Steve Nash had 23 points and 15 assists as Phoenix countered 30 points by the Cavaliers's LeBron James with five players in double figures.

In Los Angeles, Michael Finley nailed a three-pointer with a second to go in overtime to give the San Antonio Spurs a stunning 96-94 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Sunday.

Finley took a pass from Tim Duncan and drilled the long-range shot, his fifth three-pointer of the night, to finish with 17 points as San Antonio prevailed despite shooting only 33.7 percent.

Vladimir Radmanovic sank a three-pointer for the Lakers with 27 seconds remaining to send the game into the extra period at 80-80, but he missed a similar long distance effort to win the contest at the end of overtime.

Kobe Bryant scored 31 points for Los Angeles. He gave the Lakers a 94-93 lead on a jumper with seven seconds remaining in overtime before Finley delivered his long shot.

Duncan added 21 points, 14 rebounds and nine assists for the Spurs. Manu Ginobili also had 21 for San Antonio.

Antawn Jamison had 34 points as Eastern Conference-leader Washington handed the Boston Celtics their 11th straight loss, a 105-91 setback at Boston. Delonte West had 22 points and 11 assists for Boston.

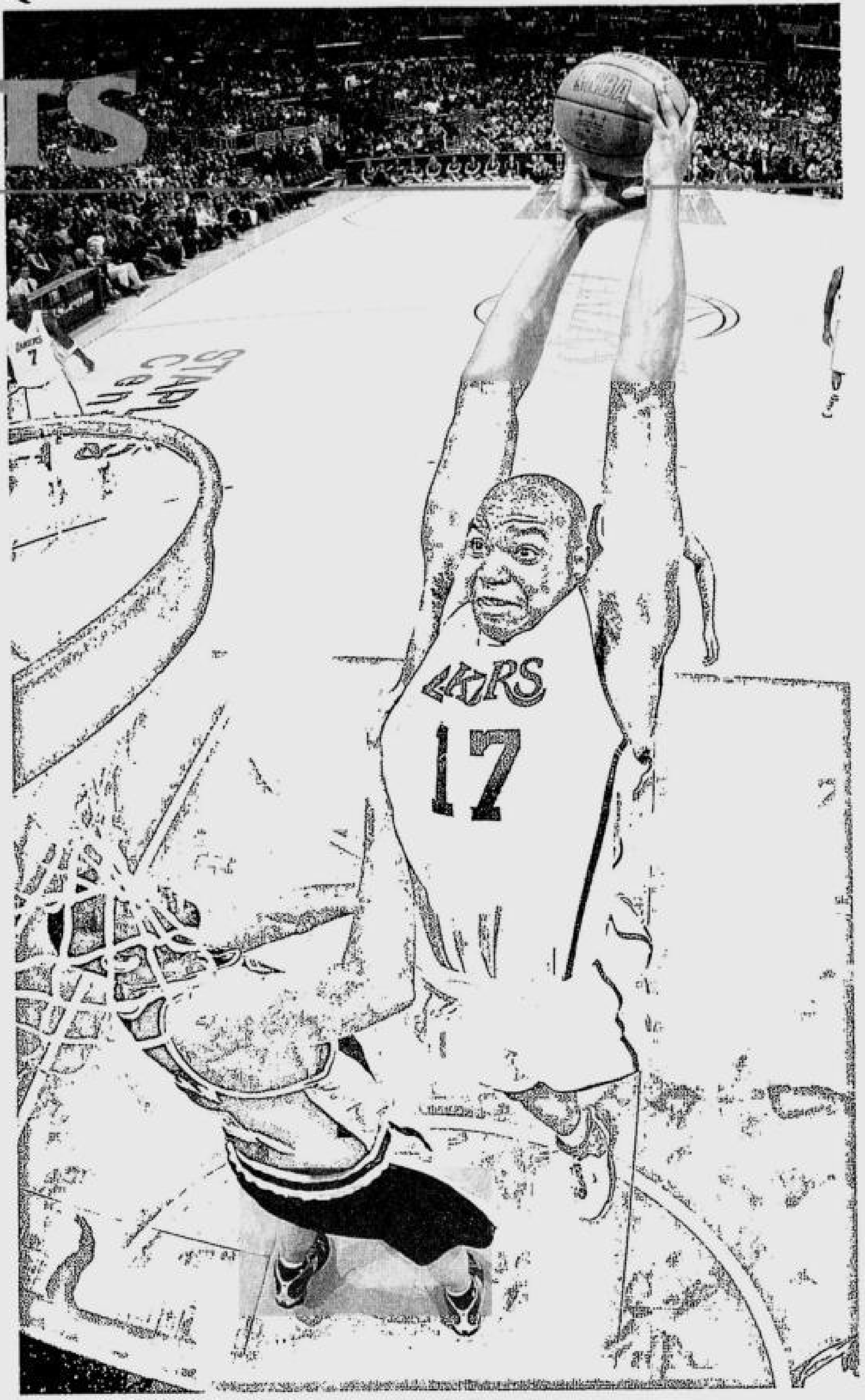
Chris Webber contributed 17 points and 13 rebounds and Detroit Pistons coach Flip Saunders won his 500th game, a 95-87 home victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Jermaine O'Neal led Indiana with 26 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots.

Milwaukee Bucks guard Mo Williams, who missed nine games with a shoulder injury, returned to score 30 points in a 107-105 home win over the New York Knicks.

Reuters

NBA on TV Today
9 a.m. — Portland vs NO/OKC
(replays at 4 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.)



ANDREW Bynum of the Lakers dunks against the Spurs. AFP

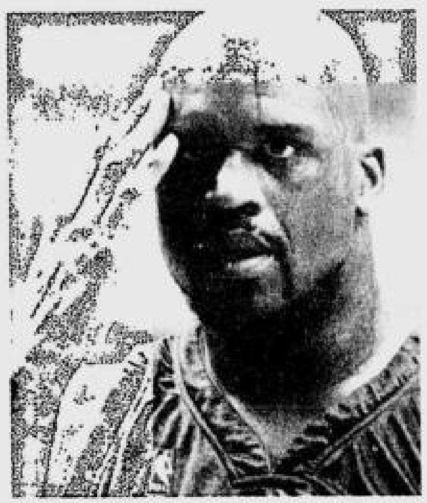
Shaquille helps police nab hit-and-run driver

MIAMI—BASKETBALL STAR Shaquille O'Neal helped police capture a hit-and-run driver early Sunday morning, hours after his Miami Heat teammates had lost in Chicago without him.

"Shaq" and bodyguard Jerome Crawford were just back from Chicago, where the Bulls edged the defending National Basketball Association champions 100-97. O'Neal did not play after two games back following a long knee surgery absence.

O'Neal, a reserve Miami Beach police officer, was outside Crawford's home in Coconut Grove unloading luggage at about 4 in the morning when a car driven by 18-year-old Emmnueo Cibrin veered into O'Neal's parked 2007 Cadillac.

O'Neal and his bodyguard leaped into the damaged vehicle and trailed the teen for about five minutes before catching up with him and passenger Junior Rondon, who told the Miami Herald they were afraid to stop.



O'NEAL: A reserve Miami Beach police officer. AP

"He was going to stop, but then we saw the Escalade chasing us," Rondon said. "We got scared and kept driving."

Rondon said he was stunned to see O'Neal, a 7-foot-1 center who led the Heat to the team's first NBA crown last June, step from the vehicle.

"I couldn't believe that," Rondon said. "Of all the people. I mean, damn."

"He told us to shut up. He said, 'I don't want to talk to you right now.'"

O'Neal, 34, waved over a nearby police officer, Rondon said, and police cited Cibrin for leaving the scene of an accident.

O'Neal was made a police officer in December of 2005, three months after helping officers capture a man accused of a hate crime.

Last June, while O'Neal was napping before game five of the NBA Finals, a man who had been abducted in Miami Beach was dropped in front of O'Neal's home and buzzed the NBA star's house, prompting "Shaq" to call police who later arrested two men in connection with the incident.

AFP

Montoya's team prevails

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA—SIGNING Juan Pablo Montoya is already paying dividends for Chip Ganassi, and the start of the NASCAR season is still three weeks off.

Montoya, co-driving a Lexus Riley Daytona Prototype with veteran road racer Scott Pruett and Mexican phenom Salvador Duran, is in elite company. He and racing great Mario Andretti are the only drivers to have won the Indianapolis 500, an American open-wheel championship, a Formula One race and, the Colombian's latest conquest, a sports car endurance race at Daytona International Speedway.

What's next?

"I'm back here for the Daytona 500 in a couple of weeks," said Montoya, set to begin his first full season in NASCAR's Nextel Cup series. "Hopefully, we can do something about that one, too."

Andretti won that NASCAR race in 1967.

Ganassi was asked if the win in the Rolex 24 bodes well for Montoya's move back to the US after several successful but unfulfilling years in F1?

"It's a good start, I'll tell you that," said Ganassi, for whom Montoya won the CART title in 1999 and Indy in 2000.

Montoya gave his team the lead Sunday morning and Pruett kept it to the finish. This is the second straight year that Ganassi's team has won the grueling 24-hour event. Former IRL champions Dan Wheldon and Scott Dixon combined with NASCAR driver Casey Mears to win the 2006 race.

"This was just a total team win," said Ganassi, the first team owner to win this race back-to-back since Al Holbert in 1986 and 1987. The winning car covered 668 laps and 2,378 miles.

AP

Woods spells relevance of 7th straight triumph

SAN DIEGO—TIGER WOODS TOOK GREAT care to spell out the relevance of his seventh successive victory on the PGA Tour after clinching the Buick Invitational by two shots on Sunday.

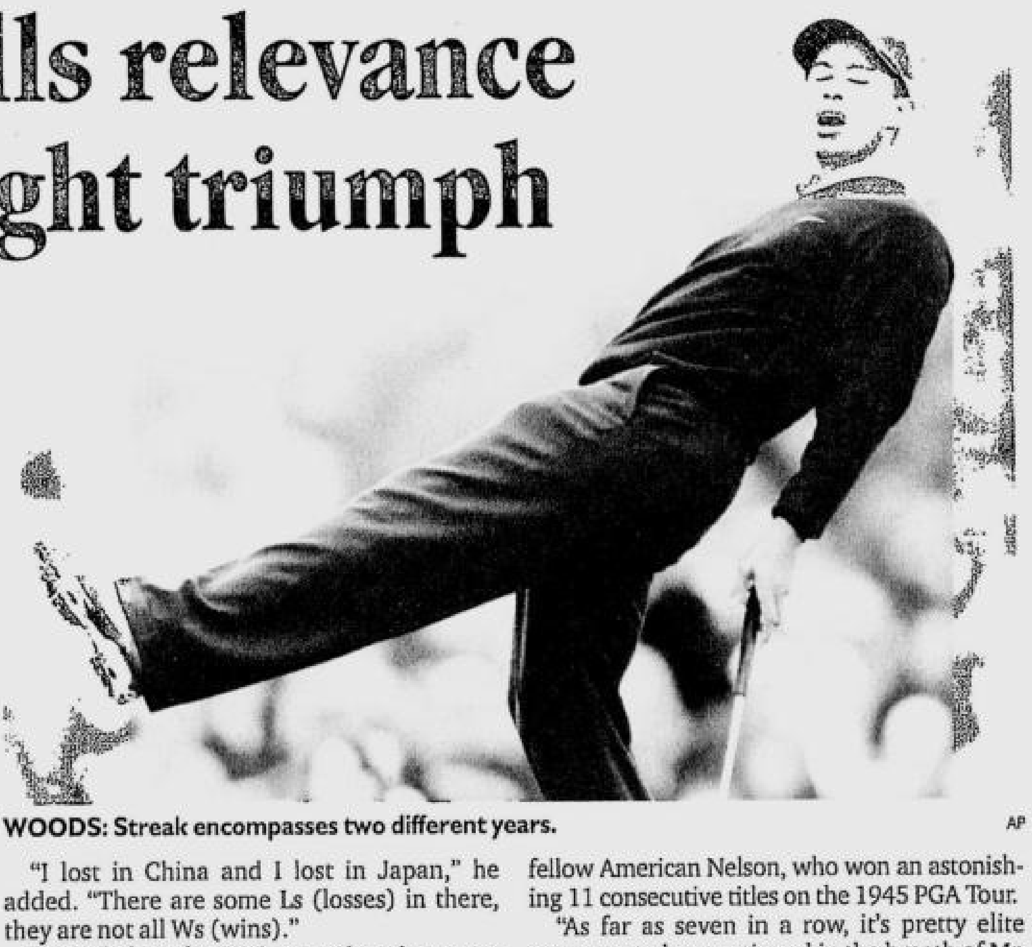
Although his fifth title at Torrey Pines lifted him behind only Byron Nelson in Tour win streaks, his superb run of form since last July has been punctuated by two second-place finishes in Asia.

"You have to clarify it, it's not a worldwide streak," Woods told reporters after firing a six-under-par 66 on the challenging South Course.

"I play all around the world. It's a PGA Tour streak ... and on top of that, it encompasses two different years, just like '99 and 2000."

The world number one, whose title run dates back to last year's British Open, won six consecutive PGA Tour events from the 1999 WGC-NEC Invitational to the 2000 Pebble Beach National Pro-Am.

Woods has not finished worse than second since the Western Open last July, also posting runner-up spots at the HSBC tournament in China and the Dunlop Phoenix in Japan last November.



WOODS: Streak encompasses two different years. AP

"I lost in China and I lost in Japan," he added. "There are some Ls (losses) in there, they are not all Ws (wins)."

Nevertheless, the 12-times major winner was clearly proud after moving one step closer to fellow American Nelson, who won an astonishing 11 consecutive titles on the 1945 PGA Tour.

"As far as seven in a row, it's pretty elite company to be mentioned in the breath of Mr. Nelson," Woods said.

Reuters

Call me genius, says Federer

MELBOURNE—NO WONDER Roger Federer wishes he could jump into a time machine and go back through the years to have a shot at Rod Laver or Bjorn Borg.

With no real rival in sight, the Swiss master completed the most dominant men's grand slam campaign in 27 years when he repelled Chilean Fernando Gonzalez at the Australian Open on Sunday to win his 10th major crown.

Not since Borg's run to the 1980 Roland Garros title had a man won a grand slam title without dropping a set in the tournament.

At the speed the Federer Express has been going, Pete Sampras' record haul of 14 majors will be wiped from the history books by 2008.

It took the American 12 years to amass his trophies, Federer has scooped up number 10 in just over 3-1/2.

"For me, it's really scary how many I've won," the Swiss said following his 7-6, 6-4, 6-4 win.

"If somebody would have told me I'd win 10 grand slams from mid 2003 till today, I never would have thought there was any chance of doing something like that.

"If I were another player, I would be amazed a little bit to see always the same guy winning."

FEDERER: No rival. AP

If Federer himself is amazed, his peers must be sick of seeing the all-conquering Swiss on the other side of the net.

Andy Roddick dared to suggest last week that the rest of the world was closing the gap with Federer. That theory was blown wide open when the world number one pulverized the American sixth seed in the semifinals for the loss of just six games.

Federer marched into his seventh successive grand slam final at Melbourne Park, equalling the record of Australian Jack Crawford set in 1934.

"I guess you can call me a genius because I'm outplaying many of my opponents, kind of maybe playing a bit different, you know, winning when I'm not playing my best," said Federer.

Reuters

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$1-B Nonoc mines rehab deal collapses

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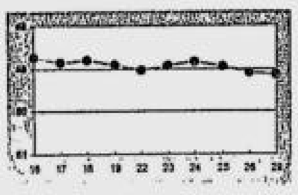

₱49.13 = $1

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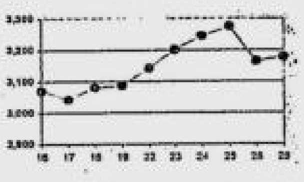
STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks up slightly

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.46-PERcent higher yesterday as investors bought into stocks ahead of the re-

STOCKS/B2

Philnico opens doors to other investors

By Daxim L. Lucas

EXCLUSIVE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN PHILNICO Industrial Corp. and China's Jinchuan Nonferrous Metals Corp. on a proposed $1-billion rehabilitation of the Nonoc nickel mines have collapsed.

In a message sent to the INQUIRER, Philnico president Evaristo Narvaez Jr. said his firm ended talks with Jinchuan after the prospective Chinese investor insisted on doing another feasibility study, which would push back the project's launch significantly.

This feasibility study, he said, "would delay considerably the project by six to 12 months, without any assurance of a definitive agreement."

"So we decided to consider other options to move the project forward," he said, adding that Philnico has started talks with other groups—including two others from China—in a bid to revive the project.

"Since the news of the stall in our negotiations, there [have been] four companies from China (two), Russia and Japan who have expressed serious interest," Narvaez said.

Located on Nonoc Island off Surigao City, the nickel mines is touted to hold one of the biggest nickel and cobalt deposits in Southeast Asia.

The investment needed to rehabilitate the project would have been the single biggest Chinese investment in the country, dwarf-

$1-B NONOC/B2

PDIC eyes sale of ₱15B in acquired assets

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE STATE-OWNED PHILIPPINE Deposit Insurance Corp. is planning to sell as much as P15 billion worth of bad assets accumulated from its receivership, liquidation and rehabilitation of ailing banks.

PDIC president Michael Osmeña told reporters that the agency would seek legal clearance on whether it could avail itself of the fiscal incentives offered by the Special Purpose Vehicle Law for the planned asset sale.

"We have had several meetings with (auditing firms) KPMG and Ernst & Young, to know how they can assist us, to determine whether we can (use the SPV framework)," Osmeña said.

The SPV Law intends to help banks get rid of their nonperforming assets by waiving some of the taxes and reducing fees usually collected in the sale or

PDIC/B2

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AEV to pour P6B into power sector

Fund raised from sale of treasury shares

By Daxim L. Lucas

PUBLICLY LISTED ABOITIZ EQUITY Ventures (AEV) raised P6.1 billion, equivalent to $124 million, from its sale of treasury shares to fund its investments in the power sector.

In a disclosure to the stock exchange, the Cebu-based conglomerate said the funds were raised from the successful placement of 742,511,938 treasury shares with international and local investors.

The shares were sold at P8.20 apiece.

"The price represents a discount of 5.7 percent to the share price close of P8.70 on Jan. 26, 2007," AEV corporate secretary M. Jasmine Oporto said in a letter to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

International investors took up 92 percent of the offering, while domestic investors bought the remaining eight percent.

"The offering saw high quality demand from approximately 60 institutional investors in the United States, Europe and Asia," she said. "The proceeds of the sale will be used by AEV for various 'greenfield' power projects, as well as for the participation in the privatization of the National Power Corp.'s power plants."

Recently, the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. awarded the 360-megawatt Magat Hydroelectric Power Plant to SN Aboitiz Power Inc., a joint venture between Aboitiz Power Corp. and SN Power of Norway, after the firm submitted the highest bid of US$530 million for the power facility located in Isabela province.

In connection with the placement, AEV has agreed with placement agents to a lock-up undertaking, restricting the issue of AEV shares for a period ending three months from the date of completion of the placement, the company said earlier.

Shares of AEV ended yesterday's trading session at P8.40 apiece, lower by P0.30 from the previous session's close, with P69.4 million worth of shares changing hands.

Stocks up slightly

From page B1

lease of 2006 growth figures due later this week, dealers said.

Investors also took into consideration the first batch of 2006 corporate results expected this week in their buying choices, they said.

The composite index rose 14.54 points to end at the day's high of 3,177.36. It hit a low of 3,155.78.

The broader all-share index rose 8.54 points to 1,976.46.

Gainers led losers 71 to 41, while 48 stocks were unchanged. Volume was 2.89 billion shares worth P8.87 billion.

"The major correction last Friday provided bullish investors fresh buying opportunity," DA Market Securities president Nestor Aguila said.

However, he said investors were less aggressive this time as many of them preferred to buy at bigger discounts.

Erwin Balita, an analyst at AB Capital Securities Inc., said in a note: "Lower country risks have resulted in a better valuation for most big cap issues. Adjustments to PLDT has resulted in a consensus valuation of P3,000/share for the cash-rich firm."

Top-traded Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was up P5 at P2,635. *AFP*

Shape of stings to come

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

JUST BETWEEN US GIRLS, who is this fortunate individual who wants to bring out of the country some loose change amounting to $200 million? In dollars!

Okay, it is really an enormous amount of money in any language—or any currency, for that matter, whether in pesos, in dollars or in prehistoric seashells.

The OFWs of this country enslave themselves overseas to remit foreign exchange to the country, and that $200 million transaction is going the other way.

That's why the Bangko Sentral, according to whispers going around financial circles, is taking time to review the request.

One of the biggest banks in the country today is rumored to have sent the application over to the Bangko Sentral's policy-making Monetary Board.

The board, in turn—perhaps feeling that the matter has some hidden political link—wasted no time in sending the matter over to Malacañang. Oops.

And all along everybody thought that the Monetary Board is an "independent" body, freed by law from political ties even with this cute administration.

It's just that Gloriaetta had the wisdom to fill up the Monetary Board with political appointees, apparently as "payback" for favors during the elections.

But the puzzle remains as to the identity of the individual, or individuals, behind the application to remit outward such a fantastic amount in dollars.

I mean, who has that kind of money, free from any encumbrance, not tied up in any business, and he, she, it or they can just decide one day to send it out, in CASH?

* * *

Once again, the Department of Finance is reviewing the revenue collection "target" of the Bureau of Internal Revenue for 2006.

Again, that was the target for last year, and so you may wonder why on Kulapo's smelly feet does the DOF even bother with it today, in 2007.

Of primary importance to the DOF, you see, is whether or not the BIR guys are entitled to "cash incentives" for their collection performance last year.

For one, there have been media reports insisting that the BIR missed its target, laying the blame on BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag personally.

Also, the DOF itself has already admitted that the BIR missed the target, simply because the inflation rate and the interest rates in 2006 were lower than what the DOF projected in setting the target.

In fact, the DOF even gave such a technical reason for its missing the target to no less than the London-based Fitch credit rating agency.

In other words, the target that was set by the DOF itself was wrong.

In reviewing the target, the DOF wants to recommend the course of action for this cute administration, i.e., to award or not to award "cash bonus" to the BIR guys.

The fact is that, like it or not (and this goes to those salivating over Buñag's position), the business sector thinks that the BIR did a terrific job last year.

It collected some P618 billion last year, if you consider only its own tax operations, against the P500 billion collected in 2005—that's an increase of P118 billion.

It simply means that BIR people took less for themselves. Now, do they or do they not deserve to get the cash incentives?

* * *

Former finance secretary (and former trade and industry secretary) Cesar Purisima, a leading figure of the "Hyatt 10," is still jobless.

Thus, there is no truth to reports that Purisima staged his own brand of coup d'etat at the accounting firm Mananghaya and Laya.

The firm has a tie-up with KPMG accounting firm in the United States.

It was formed by former SGV big shot Mario Mananghaya, in partnership with another ex-Cabinet member, former Central Bank governor (under the Marcos dictatorship) Jaime Laya, who also served as budget secretary during martial law.

With such a distinguished pedigree, the firm was said to be attractive enough to guys like Purisima, who used to be SGV managing director, right before he was drawn by this cute administration into public office.

From what I gathered, the soft-spoken Purisima just got married. Word going around business town is that he is now a kept man.

* * *

In sounding off the alarm over the inevitability of a water shortage in the metropolis by 2010, the DENR had perfect timing.

You see, this cute administration just signed an agreement with a new consortium to operate the water service area of the bankrupt Maynilad.

In that new consortium, the group of the high profile PLDT chair Manny Pangilinan (who at the same time is trying to fix the mess in his favorite sport basketball) partnered with the construction group Consunji.

Now, everybody knows that Maynilad was doomed to fail from the start because of the leaking old pipes in its concession area.

In banking circles, they are talking about the shape of things to come. Maybe the consortium fell for the government "sting" in getting the problematic Maynilad area.

Really, can MVP and company expect to make money in the water business? Or will the consortium be content with making money in the construction side—laying down new pipes, for instance which, nevertheless may require ... well, "rate adjustments."

And will we not be more willing to accept the higher rates, if only to prevent the impending water crisis, made public by the screaming DENR Secretary Angelo Reyes?

Years ago, San Miguel Corp. already knew about the water shortage that was just announced by the DENR. San Miguel even bought a huge area in Batangas with lots of fresh water.

So how come the DENR tells us about it only now?

$1-B Nonoc mines rehab deal collapses

From page B1

ing even the $400-million North Rail system launched last year.

According to sources familiar with the deal, negotiations between Philnico and Jinchuan collapsed due to disagreements over the operating structure of the firm once rehabilitation has been completed.

Philnico, which owns the mining rights on Nonoc Island, wanted to be given a bigger share of the rehabilitated firm's equity, and, consequently, its earnings. The Chinese side, on the other hand, allegedly insisted on structuring the firm in such a way that the bulk of the profits would be made in China and not by the unit operating locally.

This time around, Narvaez said the firm would entertain the investor with the best offer for the rehabilitation of the Nonoc mines, which was shuttered in 1986 amid falling commodity prices worldwide.

"We would like to make the process competitive in order to assure the best terms for all our stakeholders and the country," he said. In contrast, the proposed deal with Jinchuan was sealed through a government-to-government agreement between President Macapagal-Arroyo and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

The Philnico chief's most recent statement stands in sharp contrast with his stand of late last year when he expressed optimism that the Philippine government would help broker a deal between both parties.

Given the collapse of the talks with Jinchuan and the time it will take to strike a new deal with any of the prospective investors, Nonoc mines may restart operations in 2009, at the earliest, Narvaez said.

PDIC eyes sale of P15B in acquired assets

From page B1

transfer of assets. The law waived the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value-added tax and likewise reduced the registration/transfer fees by half.

But since PDIC is a banking regulator and not a bank, Osmeña said the institution would like a confirmation on whether it could be covered by the law.

"If we're allowed to sell (thru SPV), we'll do it," Osmeña said, when asked on whether he was expecting major progress in the PDIC's asset disposal program within this year.

Right now, he said the PDIC was already selling bad assets on a retail basis.

"But we can't hold on it for long," Osmeña said. "It's hard to sell nowadays especially if it involves the land in the provinces."

He said Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, who also chairs PDIC, was supportive of efforts to clean up some of the idle assets in its books.

He said the PDIC had two types of bad assets it would like to dispose of: Property assets acquired from foreclosed banks and the bad loans it acquired from banks placed under government-assisted rehabilitation.

Being the agency mandated to handle bailout programs for distressed banks and to liquidate the insolvent ones, many bankers are interested in how the PDIC addressed the pile-up of bad assets from these operations.

Manila Water receives corporate honors

PUBLICLY LISTED MANILA WATER Co. Inc. was recently voted second best firm for overall corporate governance in the country, according to a recent survey conducted by Asiamoney magazine.

In a statement to the stock exchange, Manila Water said the criteria for the survey were "disclosure and transparency, responsibilities of management and the board of directors, shareholders' rights and equitable treatment and investor relations."

The Ayala-owned firm, which came behind the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. in the annual ranking, operates the water concession area for Metro Manila's east zone.

Manila Water president Antonio T. Aquino said he considered the high rating as a significant achievement since the company was given only "a matter of months" since the firm's listing in March 2005.

"The result of the Asiamoney survey affirms our commitment to observing the highest standards of corporate governance," Aquino said. "It motivates us to further improve our current platform of governance."

Asiamoney, a leading financial publication, conducted the survey among CEOs, chief information officers, and senior executives from fund management and hedge fund companies in the Asia-Pacific region, the UK and USA, as well as head of research and senior analysts in brokerages across the region.

The publication received a total of 88 valid responses from 76 institutions.

Seventeen companies were cited in the survey, with Manila Water coming after PLDT.

Manila Water's parent firm, Ayala Corp., was voted third best in the rankings. *Daxim L. Lucas*

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of Jan. 29, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	48.5	49	48.5	48.5	1,243,500
Bank of the Phil. Islands	69.5	70.5	69	70.5	1,266,700
China Banking Corp.	690	690	680	685	11,950
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	28	28	28	28	25,600
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	400
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.51	0.51	0.49	0.49	940,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	85	86	85	86	30,400
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	58	58.5	57.5	57.5	3,966,900
Phil. Bank of Comm. A	50	50	50	50	300
Philippine National Bank	48	48	48	48	44,800
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	36.5	37.5	36.5	37.5	175,000
Security Bank Corp.	73.5	73.5	73.5	73.5	17,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	59	59	59	59	1,300
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.26	2.26	2.26	2.26	7,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.7	4.75	219,000
First Abacus Financial	0.56	0.56	0.56	0.56	50,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1600	1630	1600	1630	1,730
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.62	1.62	1.56	1.56	16,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	377.5	380	370	380	1,220
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2050	2050	2050	2050	240
Ivantage Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.6	1.62	258,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.8	5	4.8	4.95	22,088,000
First Gen Corp.	53	57	53	56.5	994,200
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	72.5	73	71.5	72	1,043,400
Manila Electric Co. A	69	70.5	69	70.5	124,600
Manila Electric Co. B	69	71	69	71	1,671,500
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9	9.2	9	9.2	1,640,000
Petron Corp.	4.2	4.45	4.2	4.4	29,631,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.29	3,350,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.8	1.82	1.8	1.82	30,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.2	1.24	1.2	1.2	855,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.75	20.75	20.5	20.5	256,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	43	43	43	43	439,200
RFM Corp.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	112,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	94,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63	63	62.5	63	37,400
San Miguel Corp. B	75	75	74	74.5	322,300
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	1,000
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.08	2.08	2.04	2.04	294,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.75	18.75	18.5	18.75	475,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.24	1.32	1.24	1.3	45,960,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.35	4.4	4.3	4.3	1,055,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.3	1,819,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	5.7	5.9	5.7	5.9	18,000
Republic Cement Corp.	5.3	5.3	5.2	5.3	268,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5	5.2	5	5.1	4,121,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.67	0.69	0.67	0.69	340,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.79	0.81	0.78	0.8	54,190,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.3	0.31	0.28	0.31	81,220,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Asia Amalgamated Holdings	0.43	0.5	0.43	0.5	350,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0095	0.0095	0.009	0.009	49,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.01	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	32,000,000
Ayala Corp.	595	620	590	620	77,670
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	680,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	8.8	8.8	8.3	8.4	8,250,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0825	0.085	0.0825	0.0825	40,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.1	3.2	3	3.2	1,157,000
APC Group Inc.	0.39	0.4	0.38	0.4	21,890,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	31,800,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.24	1.26	1.24	1.24	3,139,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	30,000
ATN Holdings Inc. B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	30,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	60,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	15,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	3	3.15	3	3.05	46,057,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.8	1,227,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	4.85	4.95	4.8	4.8	3,677,000
F&J Princ.E Holdings Corp.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	109,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	600,000
House Of Investments Inc.	2.75	2.9	2.75	2.8	259,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.25	12.5	12.25	12.25	701,000
Keppel Holdings B	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	2,000
Medco Holdings	0.29	0.31	0.29	0.31	2,780,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	5.2	5.3	5.1	5.2	173,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.96	2.02	1.94	1.98	2,843,000
Pacifica	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	10,000,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.08	1.02	1.02	290,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.58	1.5	1.58	42,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.155	0.16	0.155	0.16	10,850,000
SM Investments Corp.	365	367.5	355	362.5	273,200
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.66	1.7	1.66	1.7	181,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.25	0.27	0.25	0.27	4,800,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	16	16.5	16	16.25	4,565,600
Belle Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.18	1,142,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.94	2	1.9	1.92	3,162,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.48	750,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.4	67,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.88	1.94	1.88	1.92	471,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	30,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	660,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.69	0.71	0.69	0.7	9,790,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	158,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.065	0.0675	0.065	0.0675	2,600,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.205	0.215	0.205	0.205	830,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.225	0.225	0.205	0.205	300,000
Interport Res. B	0.009	0.0095	0.009	0.0095	4,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.51	1,870,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.79	0.8	0.79	0.8	1,230,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.025	1,500,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.023	0.026	0.023	0.026	8,800,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.46	2.5	2.46	2.5	91,671,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	127,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.37	6,030,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.75	16	15.75	15.75	1,897,400
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.65	0.67	0.64	0.66	6,790,000
SM Development Corp.	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,183,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.5	11.5	11.25	11.5	5,030,200
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.59	0.59	200,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.1	0.1	1,350,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	21.25	21.75	21.25	21.5	71,900
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.96	1.96	1.9	1.94	5,713,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1285	1290	1285	1285	74,570
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.5	6.7	6.5	6.7	3,013,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2630	2640	2600	2635	196,170
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	15,020,000
Ionics Inc.	2.65	2.7	2.65	2.7	760,000
IPVG Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.65	3.65	63,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0575	0.0575	0.055	0.055	1,600,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.06	0.0575	0.06	2,300,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.34	2.34	2.26	2.26	1,595,000
Philweb Corp.	0.034	0.036	0.033	0.036	419,200,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	102,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	23.75	24	23.75	24	712,400
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	10,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.24	1.24	64,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.06	2.08	288,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.38	0.35	0.36	180,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.61	0.63	0.61	0.61	530,000
EDUCATION					
iPeople Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	20,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.12	2.14	2.06	2.08	804,000
Paxys Inc.	23.25	24.5	23.25	23.75	1,151,600
Philcomsat Holdings Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	18,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.2	5.3	5.2	5.3	472,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.3	5.4	5.3	5.4	456,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	108,100,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.9	9.3	8.9	9.3	1,268,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.4	9.4	9.4	9.4	21,000
Benguet Corp. B	32	32	32	32	1,300
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	1,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.28	26,420,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.29	2,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.026	76,300,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	68,300,000
Omico Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	142,000,000
Philex Mining Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.85	3.85	2,990,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	16	17.25	16	17.25	474,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.75	0.77	0.74	0.77	3,790,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.56	1.58	1.52	1.58	2,778,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	1,200,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	54,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	54,800,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	460,400,000
PNOC Exploration Corp.-B	21.5	24.5	21.5	24.5	1,600
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	75,100
PREFERRED					
Ayala Corp. Pref. B	115	115	115	115	30,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	11	11	11	11	200
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	11	11	11	11	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	11	11	11	11	500
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	21	22	21	21.75	229,500
Metro Pac. Inv.- Warrants	3.8	3.8	3.65	3.65	288,000

CURRENCIES

January 29, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.773994	1.000000	49.0720
Japan	Yen	0.006369	0.008229	0.4038
United Kingdom	Pound	1.517337	1.960400	96.2007
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.099113	0.128054	6.2839
Switzerland	Franc	0.617515	0.797830	39.1511
Canada	Dollar	0.655872	0.847386	41.5829
Singapore	Dollar	0.503378	0.650364	31.9147
Australia	Dollar	0.598372	0.773096	37.9374
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.053034	2.652520	130.1645
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.206376	0.266638	13.0845
Brunei	Dollar	0.501746	0.648256	31.8112
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000085	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.023243	0.030030	1.4736
UAE	Dirham	0.210748	0.272287	13.3617
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.292000	63.4010
Korea	Won	0.000823	0.001063	0.0522
China	Yuan**	0.099539	0.128604	6.3109
Argentina	Peso	0.249273	0.322061	15.8042
Brazil	Real	0.363070	0.469087	23.0190
Denmark	Kroner	0.134176	0.173355	8.5069
India	Rupee	0.017547	0.022671	1.1125
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.221141	0.285714	14.0206
Mexico	New Peso	0.070105	0.090576	4.4447
New Zealand	Dollar	0.538393	0.695604	34.1347
South Africa	Rand	0.106401	0.137470	6.7459
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023504	0.030367	1.4902

Alliance moves to promote use of biofuels

Launches educational caravan on Feb. 3-13

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE FUEL ETHAnol Alliance yesterday said it was launching this weekend a caravan that would showcase vehicles that run on biofuels in the wake of the recent signing into law of the Biofuels Act as well as an East Asian pact that encourages the large-scale use of cleaner fuels.

PFEA groups government and private sector backers of large-scale use of biofuels, including the Philippine Sugar Millers Association, Sugar Masterplan Foundation (representing planters), the Sugar Regulatory Administration, Center for Alcohol Research and Development and Petron Corp.

Officials of PFEA said it was working with the Department of Energy, the US Sustainable Energy Development Program, Seaoil, and independent oil firm Flying V in organizing the caravan that runs from Pagudpud in Ilocos Norte on Feb. 3 to Davao City on Feb. 13.

The officials said the campaign would feature vehicles that run on bioethanol (gasoline) and biodiesel to help educate the general public on specific concerns relating to the use of biofuels.

The caravan would cover Northern Luzon until Feb. 5 and would stop at Luisita in Tarlac; Sta. Rosa in Laguna and the cities of Lipa and Batangas in Southern Tagalog; Iloilo City in Panay Island; the cities of Bacolod and San Carlos in Negros Island; Cagayan de Oro City, and Malaybalay City in Bukidnon.

PFEA said public forums on the subject would be conducted in three selected key cities—Tarlac, Bacolod, and Cagayan de Oro. Representatives of public and private motoring groups, business groups, the academe, and local government units are expected to attend.

In particular, speakers from the DOE, the Automobile Association of the Philippines, and Clean Cities Coalition of the Philippines would discuss issues on vehicle compatibility and fuel economy.

Extension of NLEX concession seen

By Michelle V. Remo

MANILA NORTH Tollways Corp. (MNTC) said a discussion on the extension of its 25-year concession to operate and develop the North Luzon Expressway was possible given the delays in the implementation of projects extending the NLEX.

Rodrigo Franco, MNTC executive vice president, said construction of extension projects has not been on schedule given various causes of delays, such as difficulty in settling issues concerning right of way.

Under its concession contract with the government, MNTC is supposed to shoulder all cost and take charge of rehabilitating and developing the NLEX. The company's borrowing initiatives are not covered by a sovereign guaranty, Franco noted.

On the other hand, the government should handle right-of-way issues that should be addressed to push the MNTC's projects through.

Franco, however, said that serious fiscal problems of the government in the past adversely affected it capability to pay the cost of getting rights of way.

The first phase of the NLEX was recently completed. This involved the rehabilitation and expansion of the existing 84-kilometer stretch connecting Metro Manila to Sta. Ines, Pampanga.

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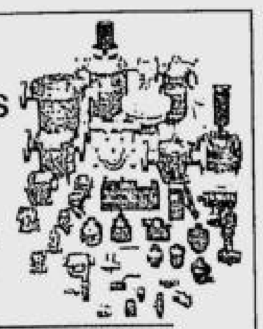

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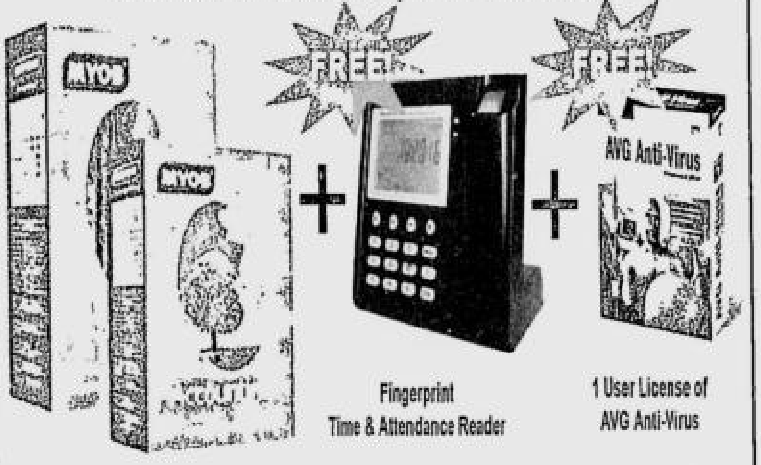
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"Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are beside me."

Psalm 23:4

Secretary Ronaldo V. Puno, officials and employees of the **Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG)**, including the **National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM)**, the **Philippine National Police (PNP), Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), Local Government Academy, Patrol 117 Commission** and the **Regional Offices** express their heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the family of

BENITO DEL ROSARIO CATINDIG

Assistant Secretary, DILG

who peacefully joined his Creator on 27 January 2007 at the age of 59.

The DILG Family joins the bereaved family in prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

Necrological services will be held today, January 30, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at the Premiere 2, 3rd Floor, Loyola Memorial Chapel, Guadalupe, Makati City, and Cremation will be on January 31, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,"
Philippians 1:21

Please omit flowers.

PASCUAL MABILANGAN CASTILLO

"KELLY"

Peacefully joined his Creator
on January 28, 2007 at the age of 83.

His loving wife **Myrna**; children **Vicky** and **Charlie Abeleda, Lorna** and **Danny Janolo, Veronica** and **Manny Malolos, Em-em** and **Tristan Envenga, Rosa** and **Mario Quintanilla, Vince** and **Barbie**; and all his grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for his eternal happiness in heaven.

His remains were cremated at the Holy Trinity Funeral Homes, and lies in state at the Capilla de San Francisco, Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

ROSALINDA "LILY" LOMIBAO QUIMSON

Born January 20, 1915

of Dagupan City and Alaminos, Pangasinan

Wife of Atty. Sofronio C. Quimson, Sr. (†)
(Former Governor of Pangasinan)

Peacefully passed away in the grace of our Lord
on January 26, 2007 at the age of 92.

Her bereaved sons, **Antonio, Victor** and **Sofronio, Jr.**; daughters-in-law, **Lucila Bacani**, and **Lulu Fullon**; grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the mortuary of the Santuario De San Jose Parish, Greenhills East, City of Mandaluyong.

Interment will be on February 2, 2007 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City, after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Santuario De San Jose Parish, Greenhills.

"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

"In peace I shall both lie down and sleep,
for you alone, Lord make me secure..."
Psalm 4:9

Teresa Jennifer "Jenny" Ileto-Severino

Has peacefully joined her Creator
on January 28, 2007 at the age of 46.

Her loving husband, **Jessie**; brothers and sisters, **Rey & Loolee, Freddie & Bambi, Tina & Raffy Diaz, Jeffrey & June, Michelle & Alex de Belen, Marissa**; nephews and nieces, other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her cremains are at the Santuario de San Jose, Greenhills (Parish Hall # 3, beside the Adoration Chapel)*.

Necrological service will be held tomorrow, January 31, 2007 at 7pm.

**Visitors are advised that village regulations allow entry not later than 10pm.*

In Loving Memory

on her SIXTH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

AGNES "GIRLIE" FLORES DOMINGO

Masses will be offered on January 31, 2007, Wednesday for the eternal repose of her soul, at the following Churches:

St. John the Evangelist Church, *Guimba, Nueva Ecija*	6:00 AM
San Antonio de Padua Church, *Lincoln St. SFDM, Quezon City*	6:00 AM
St. Anthony of Padua Church, *Singalong, Manila*	6:00 AM
St. Joseph the Worker Church, *Pacdal Circle, Baguio City*	6:15 AM
Malate Catholic Church, *Malate, Manila*	7:00 AM
St. Jude Catholic Church, *San Miguel, Manila*	7:00 AM
Santuario de San Antonio, *Forbes Park, Makati*	7:30 AM
Greenbelt Chapel, *Ayala Center, Makati City*	12:15 PM

LUZ M. CALIXTO

(August 15, 1917 – January 26, 2007)
Peacefully joined our Lord at the age of 89.

Her husband, **Jose (Pepe †)**; children **Boy & Ging, Ching & Bert, Danny & Linda, Lanie & Ed (†), Mar & Marisu, Malou, George & Norma, Eddie Boy (†) & Allen, Miday & Franklin, Grace, Bobby & Fronette**; grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all relatives and friends request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Lumbang Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park), Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Friday, February 2, 2007 after the 9:00 AM Resurrection Mass at Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque City.

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Lafayette may reopen Rapu Rapu mine on Feb. 5

Company commits to complete repairs on time

AUSTRALIA'S LAFAYETTE MINing Ltd. may be allowed to reopen its Rapu Rapu mine on Feb. 5, more than a year after its closure due to two cyanide spills, a government official said.

Horacio Ramos, head of the Mines and Geosciencies Bureau, said Lafayette had committed to finish by early next month all the necessary repairs of electrical poles and housing facilities that were damaged by typhoon Durian in late November.

"The ball is in their court," Ramos said. "Lafayette has committed to the government to make the plant, mine, mill and tailings dam operational by Feb. 5."

"The DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources) may lift the cease and desist order on Feb. 5 if they comply with all the requirements," he added.

The government allowed Lafayette to test its base metals facility from July 10 to Dec. 8 last year, after two cyanide spills in October 2005 led to its temporary closure.

On Monday, Lafayette spokesman Bayani Agabin said his firm was on track to reopen Rapu-Rapu in February.

"The repair is going on as scheduled. As earlier announced, we are looking to complete all repairs by the first week of February," he said in a phone interview.

Typhoon Durian in late November toppled electrical poles and damaged housing facilities for the staff at the mine. But there was no critical damage to the base metals plant, Agabin has said.

The Rapu-Rapu project was the first foreign-owned mine to open after the Supreme Court upheld in December 2004 the legality of a law granting 100 percent foreign ownership of mining projects, up from 40 percent previously.

But the spills in Rapu-Rapu raised the ire of Philippine Catholic bishops and environment groups.

Before the suspension, the mine was forecast to generate revenue of $350 million a year from the production of 10,000 tons of copper concentrate, 14,000 tons of zinc, 50,000 ounces of gold and 600,000 ounces of silver.

In June, Lafayette paid a fine of P10.4 million imposed by the Philippine government after the spills.

LG International Corp and state-run Korea Resources Corp. (Kores) together hold 26 percent of Lafayette Philippines Inc. while Australia's Lafayette owns the rest.

"Assuming we start operations in early February, we expect concentrate shipment by April," Agabin said.

Lafayette has an agreement with LG International to sell its production from Rapu Rapu.

Earlier this month, the government allowed Lafayette to ship a total of 2,670 tonnes of zinc and copper concentrate which it produced during the test run of the Rapu Rapu project last year.

Agabin said Rapu Rapu's incidental production was sold by LG International to China. *REUTERS*

AirAsia seeking more flights to RP

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

MALAYSIAN BUDGET AIRline AirAsia has expressed interest in expanding its operations in the Philippines to help the government in its efforts to promote the local tourism industry.

In a briefing on the sidelines of the recently concluded World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, AirAsia chief executive officer Anthony Fernandes said he was "a big fan" of the Philippines. As such, he said he wanted to help in the country's development by offering more flights.

"If I can get the rights, I would love to also operate flights from Cebu and Davao," Fernandes said.

He said he was bullish on the tourism prospects of the Philippines saying that it had a lot of sites to offer.

"It is just that it can be difficult to fly to the country," Fernandes said.

With more flights, Fernandes said the Philippines would be opened up to the tourism market.

AirAsia currently flies to Clark in Angeles City from Kota Kinabalu and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"My plan is to go as far as the government will allow me to go," he said.

He said AirAsia had elicited the support of the Malaysian government to talk with its Philippine counterpart on the possibility of getting more flights for the airline.

AirAsia was launched as a budget carrier in December 2001, offering more than 100 domestic and international flights to Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Getting elected now too expensive – Part 2

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

EVERY DEMOCRACY REACHES a point in its history where running for an elective office has become too expensive. The United States reached that point about 40 years ago. The Philippines is at that point now.

A long, long time ago, a Filipino would run for office if only to be able to bask in the prestige of being the mayor, or *alcalde* of a municipality, or a *gobernador* of a province. To be a congressman, or *diputado*, or to be a *senador*, was the pinnacle of personal glory.

Besides, campaigning then was not too expensive. Today, running for office, even in the smallest of towns, can impoverish the candidate, win or lose. No one runs anymore for office just to attain prestige in the community.

The cost of an electoral campaign is simply far bigger than the salary and allowances of the office. As a result, the elected official gets back his investment through graft and corruption. In fact, the bundle of money a politician expects to make from all sorts of deals while in power is precisely the reason why he is in polities in the first place, even at the risk of losing an enormous initial investment.

Unless the candidate is wealthy, he relies heavily on contributions from supporters. In the United States, fund raising from the party faithful has been raised to an art form. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are raised at testimonial dinners where the President is the guest of honor. The faithful go home in the happy thought that they have paid their share and expect nothing back.

But the bulk of the campaign funds come from large contributors, the fat cats, who expect to get their investments back one way or the other. In the US, a fat cat may be rewarded with a prestigious appointment, such as ambassador to the Court of St. James in London. Others are handed huge, juicy government contracts.

In the US, campaign spending is tightly regulated. Contributions, including TV ads, are closely monitored. And most important, the law is enforced. This is why Mark Jimenez spent a year in jail for making an illegal campaign contribution.

In Germany, political parties garnering at least 5 percent of the votes in an election are granted a subsidy in the next electoral campaign. The Germans believe that, in order to elect good leaders, taxpayers should be willing to share in the campaign expenses of a party.

I am sure the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Australia and Spain have their own laws on how to limit election spending.

Here, there are also spending limits prescribed in the election code. The campaign period is limited to three months prior to election date. The size and numbers of posters are prescribed. But these rules hardly make a dent on a candidate's campaign budget.

Depending on the office he is running for, a candidate can spend a specific number of pesos per registered voter. But this rule is largely ignored. After the elections, the candidates file their sworn statements attesting that they had stayed within the spending limits set by law. The Comelec files the affidavits away, and the elected officials go their merry way into the dirty world of graft and corruption.

Comelec seems unwilling or unable to enforce the law. Or, maybe, the existing law and the implementing rules are simply impractical and unenforceable.

I have this sneaky feeling that the elections in May will be the most expensive midterm elections in our history.

After the May elections, President Arroyo should set up a Presidential Commission to propose a new law on how to put a cap on campaign spending. This new law should be practical, eforceable and in effect for the 2010 elections and onwards.

Unless we put a rein on campaign spending, let us forget about fighting graft and corruption.

JBIC loan approval seen

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT IS OPTIMistic the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), the Philippines' biggest source of foreign assistance, will grant the $250-million loan sought by the country for the power sector development program.

Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan said the loan from JBIC would co-finance the $450-million loan disbursed by the Asian Development Bank last December to support reform programs in the power sector.

The power sector development program was put up to help ensure efficient power supply to minimize the risk of power shortages in the future and address threats to economic growth.

Tan said the activities under the program include the strengthening of the operations of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) and the administrative and regulatory capability of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

The WESM, which is expected to help bring down the cost of electricity in the Philippines by promoting competition in the electric power market, started operations in June last year.

Tan said the government hopes JBIC would sign the loan in February, or before the fiscal year 2006 of the Japanese government ends in March.

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PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion and Development Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Republic of the Philippines

Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase I

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC), a subsidiary of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), through the PPMC 2007 Corporate Operating Budget, intends to apply the sum of **four hundred seventy two million eighty three thousand six hundred twenty two and 69/100 pesos (Php472,083,622.69)** being the **Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC)** to payments under the contract for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase 1. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

PPMC now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential bidders to apply for eligibility for the Upgrading of the San Fernando Airport, Phase 1. The scope of work to be undertaken shall include but is not limited to the following: furnishing of all batching plant, equipment, machinery, tools, labor, materials, transportation and all other items necessary to complete the following:

(a) Construction and strengthening of airfield pavements, including hill removal;
(b) Construction of airport horizontal and vertical structures; and
(c) Electrical works.

Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license with Category "AAA" and with Inter-Agency Category of Large "B" for General Engineering (Road, Highway Pavement, Railways, Airport Horizontal Structures and Bridges) **and** PCAB license with Category "A" and with Inter-Agency Category of Medium "B" for General Building (Building and Industrial Plant).

To be considered eligible and qualified, the prospective bidders, should have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents.

Interested Applicants may inspect the Eligibility Documents at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on January 30, 2007 to February 5, 2007.

Eligibility Documents shall be issued and made available to interested applicants upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of fity thousand pesos (Php50,000.00) at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on January 30, 2007 to February 5, 2007.

Interested Applicants shall submit their LOIs together with their accomplished Eligibility Documents to the SBAC at the BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St., Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City on or before 9:00 a.m., February 12, 2007. Opening of eligibility documents shall be at 9:30 a.m., February 12, 2007 at the above address in the presence of the prospective Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act", and is restricted unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible bidders shall be opened. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, a contract shall only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification.

Interested Eligible Bidders may obtain further information from PPMC and inspect the Bidding Documents at the addrress given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 15, 2007 to February 21, 2007.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the SBAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of the one hundred thousand pesos (Php100,000.00). The Bidding Documents shall be issued and made available at the PPMC, Administration Building, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on February 15, 2007 to February 21, 2007. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the Bidder or his authorized representative.

PPMC shall hold a Pre-Bid Conference and open to all Eligible Bidders on February 22, 2007, 2:00 p.m. at the San Fernando Airport, Terminal Building, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union.

Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids to the SBAC at the BCDA Corporate Center, 2/F Bonifacio Technology Center, 31st St., Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City on or before 9:00 a.m., March 6, 2007. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form and in the amount specified in the Bidding Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be at 9:30 a.m., March 6, 2007 at the above address in the presence of the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend.

Completion of the Works is required within four hundred five (405) calendar days from the issuance of the Notice to Proceed.

PPMC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone
Poro, San Fernando City, La Union
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ppmc@sflu.com

(Sgd.) **Atty. ANTHONY C. MANGUIAT**
Chairman
Special Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI - Jan. 30, 2007)

Global Appeal 2007

To End Stigma and Discrimination against People Affected by Leprosy

Manila, The Philippines, January 29, 2007

> *"Every person is born free and equal in dignity and human rights."* *

Many people think that leprosy no longer exists. But it does — and also the stigma and discrimination it causes.

Discrimination against people affected by leprosy is one of the oldest and most pervasive examples of social injustice in the history of the human race.

Even today, millions of men, women and children continue to suffer social, economic and legal discrimination, simply because they or a family member have had leprosy.

Leprosy is a curable disease. Yet misguided notions about leprosy persist, with devastating consequences for those thus stigmatized.

Denying the inherent human rights of anyone on the basis of disease is indefensible. Discrimination can never be justified.

Silence on this issue is not acceptable.

We urge you to join us in the fight to end this social injustice.

Together, let us create a society in which every individual is free and equal in dignity and human rights.

Global Appeal 2007 is an initiative of Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for the Elimination of Leprosy, endorsed and co-signed by leaders of People Affected by Leprosy around the world.

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Shehu Abdullahi S/Fada
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Birke Nigatu
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* From the First Article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

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Grain matter for higher IQ

Fortifying salt with iodine can help ensure proper mental development in children and safe pregnancies among women

ILLUSTRATION BY ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

By Linda B. Bolido

IT MAY NOT GUARANTEE GENIUS, BUT iodized salt can at least help prevent mental retardation and raise intelligence quotient (IQ) levels.

The fortification of salt and a few other food items, like oil, is generally considered a cheap, effective, efficient and convenient way to make sure that people who are deficient in iodine get their supply of the important mineral.

Once known primarily as the cause of goiter, the unsightly growth of the thyroid gland, iodine deficiency has since been found to have a more insidious effect, particularly among women and children. Incidentally, the Philippines started observing this year Goiter Awareness Week, which will be marked every year on the fourth week of January.

According to the website of the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD): "Iodine deficiency is the single most common cause of preventable mental retardation and brain damage in the world. It also decreases child survival, causes goiters, and impairs growth and development.

"Iodine deficiency in pregnant women causes miscarriages, stillbirths and other complications. Children with IDD can grow up stunted, apathetic, mentally retarded, and incapable of normal movements, speech, or hearing."

Deadly

The council added: "It is now known that the effects on the developing brain are much more deadly, and constitute a threat to the social and economic development of many countries."

It estimates that throughout the world, some 2.2 billion people, 38 percent of the global population, live in areas with iodine deficiency.

While seafood is good natural source of iodine, in the Philippines, an archipelago with more than 7,000 islands, deficiency exists in some parts of the country.

The Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) says, in general, iodine deficiency disorder (IDD) is mild but there are areas of concern, where severe and moderate cases have been found in some children.

About 36 out of every 100 children (35.8 percent) have moderate to severe IDD, the institute says.

It adds: "All four provinces of Northern Mindanao (Region 10) are high-risk IDD areas… About 6 to 7 out of every 10 children are moderate to severe IDD cases."

In some areas in the country, geography means limited access to seafood, hence a significant rate of IDD. The places are usually landlocked or mountainous, providing very few sources for natural iodine.

In coastal areas where IDD is a problem, marginal fisher folk often choose to sell everything they catch and subsist on cheaper but iodine-short diets.

A teaspoon in a lifetime

Like most other countries where IDD is a major concern, the Philippines has turned to the effective and affordable technology of fortifying salt with iodine. The ICCIDD says a person actually requires only a teaspoon of iodine in a lifetime.

"But because iodine cannot be stored for long periods by the body, tiny amounts are needed regularly…food fortification and supplementation have proven highly successful and sustainable interventions. Iodized salt programs and iodized oil supplements are the most common tools in the fight against IDD."

In 1995, the Philippines passed Republic Act No. 8172, or the Asin Law, to promote salt iodization nationwide. Among other things, the law requires the addition of iodine to all salt intended for animal and human consumption.

The initiative seems to be producing the desired results. According to the FNRI: "There is a dramatic improvement in the iodine status from 1998 to 2003 based on UIE (urinary iodine excretion) levels. The proportion of 6- to 12-year-old children with UIE values below 50 µg/L (micrograms per liter) is substantially lower at 11.4 percent than the 35.8 percent in 1998.

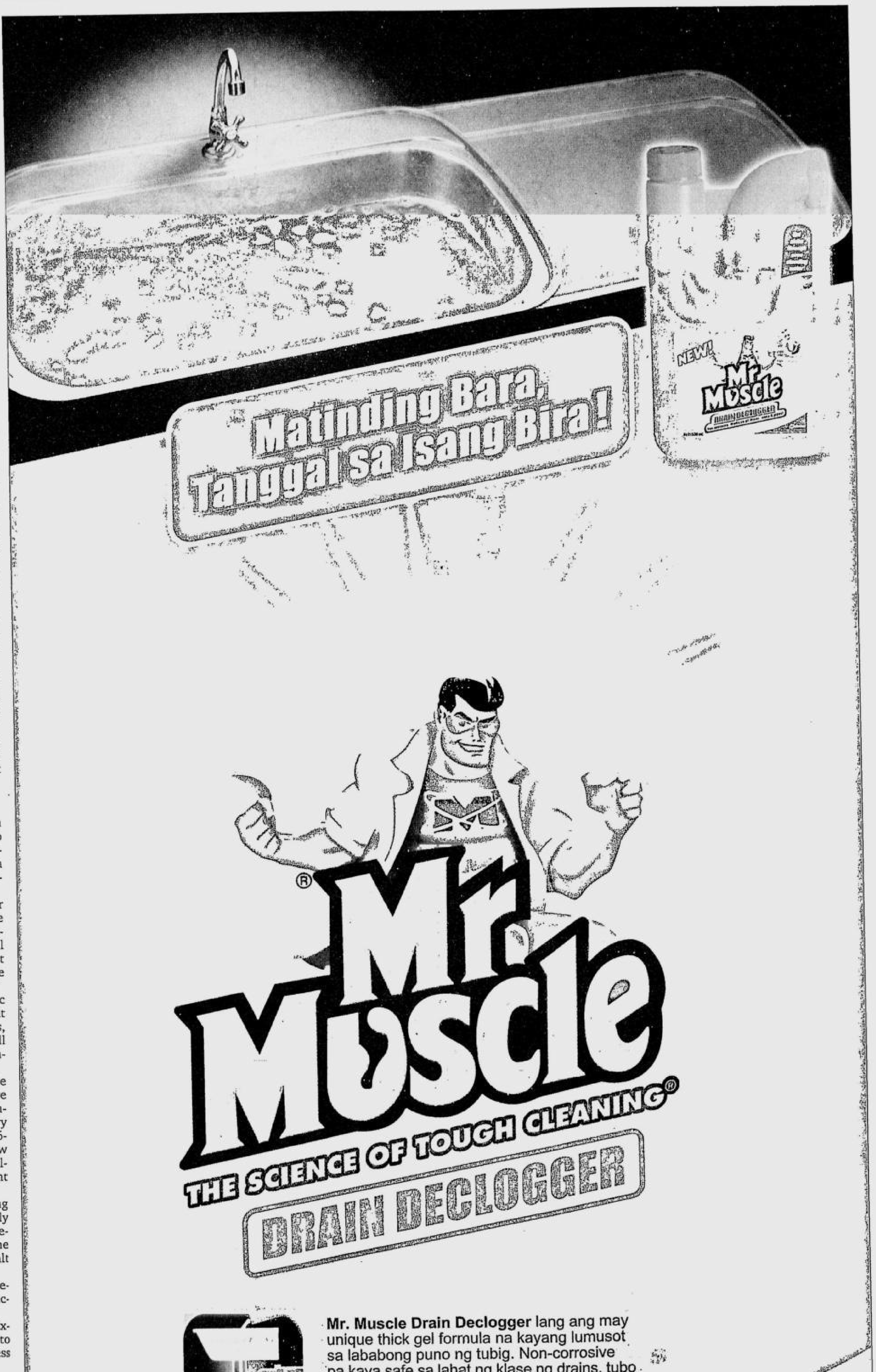
"While the information directly linking iodized salt to UIE is not available, it is highly probable that the dramatic increase in UIE between 1998 and 2003 is a result of the progress made towards USI (universal salt iodization)."

But the goal of giving 90 percent of households access to iodized salt has not been accomplished yet.

On Feb. 2, local experts and the ICCIDD Executive Board will have a Dialogue Meeting to discuss the IDD situation and review progress of the Salt Iodization Program (SIP).

Dr. Theo San Luis, Jr., ICCIDD focal point person in the Philippines, said among those invited to join the dialogue were the National Nutrition Council and allied agencies like the Department of Health, Bureau of Food and Drug and FNRI, as well as the World Health Organization, United Nations Children's Fund, salt industry, nongovernment organizations.

The meeting, San Luis said, was preparatory to the 22nd Annual Meeting on Feb. 3-4 of the ICCIDD Board at the Philippine Plaza. This is the first time the board meeting is being held here. The meeting will be followed by the 8th Congress of the Asia and Oceania Thyroid Association (Aota) on Feb. 5-6 at the same venue.



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INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Q & A on pain, cold and the blues

IN THE BATTLEFIELD OF HEALTH, THE enemies are viruses, bacteria, pollution/toxic waste and stress.

But we can arm ourselves against threats to our health.

How can I ease chronic pain?

The answer is not to pop a pill at the first sign of a headache or body pain. This can only lead to more serious problems. An over-the-counter pain killer may relieve the ache but, if using it becomes a habit, it can be dangerous.

Taking more than the prescribed dosage of acetaminophen may damage your liver. If taken with an alcoholic drink, you will definitely damage your liver (aspirin if taken in excess, especially if you are allergic to it, can irritate the stomach lining and cause ulcers).

Acetaminophen, salicylates (aspirin) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can be beneficial if you do not overdose. Better stop taking pain killers. See your doctor.

Pointers

1. Determine the source of your pain and address the real cause of the problem.

2. Try acupuncture, an ancient Chinese therapy involving the insertion of needles in key points of the body. It stimulates the release of natural pain killers or endorphins.

Acupuncture is also recommended for chronic illnesses like sinusitis/rhinitis, asthma, hypertension. See Dr. Qi-ming Zheng, a professor of acupuncture and practicing physician, at the TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine) Center, tel. 8160898. TCM has over 500 state-of-the-art herbal preparations.

3. Get a massage—acupressure, shiatsu or reflexology—to relax tense muscles instantly and ease frayed nerves. Visit HKG Foot Reflexology expert Peter Wong at Synchronicity Center. Therapists can also take care of other health conditions like migraine, back pain/spine problems. Home service is available (tel. 8131899).

4. Natural remedies like hot peppers can relieve discomfort caused by arthritis, diabetes and shingles. Dried cayenne peppers or capsicum can be bought at health stores. Ginger/peppermint tea can control arthritis and headaches. Take three times a day with no sugar.

5. Know the foods that could trigger headaches—caffeine, chocolate, cheese, yoghurt, nuts, cured meats (hotdogs, salami, etc.), *vetsin* or monosodium glutamate (MSG), citrus fruits (orange, lemon), baked goods with yeast, aspartame (artificial sweetener).

Arthritis pain triggers include corn, wheat, pork, oranges, milk, oats, rye, eggs, beef, coffee, malt, cheese, grapefruit, tomato, peanuts, sugar, butter, lamb, lemon, soy bean.

Add more fish to your diet.

(Source: Headache Q&A, The National Headache Foundation, "Inner Cleansing Cures" —FC&A Medical Publishing)

How do you 'comfort' a cold?

Everyone falls victim to a cold. Sneezes, coughs and headaches can spread cold viruses. While there are no drugs to cure a cold, it will go away in 7-10 days.

1. Take vitamin C as it can make a cold less severe. Drink citrus juices rich in vitamin C.

2. Stay cool. Stress can make you more susceptible to colds.

3. Wash your hands as often as possible.

4. Keep children's toys clean.

5. Ventilate the house.

6. Don't smoke and stay away from smokers. Tobacco lowers body resistance to infection.

7. Keep the air you breathe hot and moist. A vaporizer can ease breathing problems. You may also dip a towelette in hot water and squeeze off excess water. Place it on your nose and breathe in the warmth.

8. Drink plenty of water, 10-12 glasses daily.

9. Rest.

10. Gargle with warm water. Wash nostrils with a syringe filled with warm water, a pinch of salt and baking soda to flush out mucus.

11. Herbal remedies—echinacea/chamomile tea, freshly grated horse radish as inhalation. Mix with honey as gargle for sore throat.

Can I beat the blues?

You can but not with drugs, alcohol and sugar. When you are down, do not be alone.

1. Move your body to heal your mind. Exercise eases depression.

2. Listen to music that heals.

3. Walk in the light. A sunny day can lift your mood.

4. Be with people who make you smile and laugh. Find positive, prayerful people.

5. Eat right. Complex carbohydrates help. Take vitamin B complex.

Love and light!

CAROL Cabangon Chua with Lovely R. and Jun Cabangon Chua

BERNA Romulo Puyat with her mother, Lovely Tecson R., lady of the hour; Luli Arroyo; the gorgeous Helen Sotto, and the host, Sec. Bert Romulo

DASHING Ambassador Albert del Rosario with Mercy Tuason

A lovely surprise for a lovely lady

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare system

WE WERE TOLD TO BE THERE promptly at 8 p.m., 20 minutes before that lovely lady of ladies arrived for her big day, *palanggas*.

It was definitely a super memorable surprise for **Lovely Tecson Romulo**, who normally spends her birthday doing charity work then celebrating quietly at home with her grandchildren.

This time, suave Secretary **Bert Romulo** and children **Mons**, **Roman**, **Berna** and **Erwin** had other plans, dahlings. They gave her a surprise party at the always consistent Le Soufflé, Rockwell Club.

Though it was short notice, all her dearest pals from way back to the present arrived on time, *palanggas*. First daughter **Luli Arroyo** was there to greet Lovely though she had to leave early for another appointment. Among the guests were dashing ambassador **Albert del Rosario**; beautiful **Helen Sotto**; southern lady **Judy Araneta Roxas**; adorable and vivacious **Letty Tan**; **Virgie Barbers**; eye-catching wives of cabinet members **Sol Mendoza** and **Alice Favila**; beauteous **Angelie Tan**, daughter-in-law of Letty T.; businessman **Sabin Aboitiz**; cyber-smart lawyer **Dave Puyat**; **Sander Tantoco**; close pals ultra-glam **Ching Cruz** and **Agnes Huibonhoa**, honorary consul of Republic of Gambia; brilliant Secretary **Arthur Yap**, plus other pals of Lovely, *palanggas*.

Highlight of the affair was a duet by **Helen Sotto** and Sec. Bert Romulo, who used to be a Senate colleague of Sen. **Tito Sotto**. Then the invitees talked about how Lovely touched their lives. Top gourmand and excellent cook **Susie Ortigas** had little cakes as giveaway for those who attended the truly lovely gathering of Lovely's true friends.

Cheers, *palangga*!

New Silliman president

When *moi* got an invite to be a guest of honor for a *tres* special occasion, without batting an eyelash, *moi* was off to Dumaguete, *palanggas*.

Silliman University, one of the country's most prestigious universities, is about 400 miles south of Manila. It is a laid-back campus beside the sea with over 300 towering acacia trees and 105 years of history.

Founded in 1901 by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, Silliman started out as a modest school for boys. It later became a center of quality Christian education, thanks to the generous gift of $10,000 from Dr. Horace Brinsmade Silliman.

Nestled at the edge of the postcard-pretty Dumaguete, Silliman has 13 academic units and more than a hundred buildings. It has over 7,000 students from all over the country and 700 excellent faculty and staff members.

Silliman celebrates her 105 years by welcoming its 12th president, brilliant Dr. **Ben Malayang III**. The investiture was held at the Claire Isabel McGill Luce Auditorium, *palanggas*. Malayang, a native of Oroquieta City, Misamis Occidental, comes from a *famille* of Sillimaniańs, both on his father's and mother's sides.

"I plan to transform this campus into a highly proactive and interactive center of excellence," said Malayang in his speech.

Yes, *palanggas*, it was a fab weekend to get away from the horrendous traffic and pollution of our town's asphalt jungle.

Scent-sibilities

Chosen personas of the media and other invitees gathered at the popular People's Palace at Greenbelt 3, and mingled with some society expert and beauty and style aficionados, who shared their know-how on scents and attraction, *palanggas*. They revealed the secrets of attraction—what women and men do to click with the opposite sex.

"People often think that it's the men who do the first move, but in reality, it's the women who do. A woman sends signals, then the man approaches the woman after observing and interpreting the signals. That's part of the progressive phases of attraction," **RJ Ledesma** said.

The panelists gave tips on the best way to apply perfume. "What most people do is they spray the perfume right before they go out the door. The best way to do it though, to achieve that signature scent, is to spray the perfume directly on the skin," says **Romina Urra-Gonzales**.

Crisp and cool may be the buzzword for men's fragrances. Click, the newest fragrance from popular French brand Axe, blends the energy of citrus and fruit notes, a hint of spice, the mingling aroma of Orris and wood, and the calming whiff of a cool water base.

"Very few people know that Axe is one of the pioneering male fragrances here in the Philippines. It traces its roots from France and, for 23 years, it has produced and it continues to produce enticing scents and other grooming products for men," said super smart **Amor Maclang**.

We had the chance to be swept with the seductive scent of Axe Click, as hot, gorgeous models made the rounds. Onstage, they showed an eye-catching scene of a female getting attracted to the male because of Click, *natch*.

With Axe Click's fresh and vibrant scent, plus the useful tips on what clicks with the opposite sex, all you guys and gals will surely have more reasons (and confidence) to go and keep clicking.

Concert

Already it's February, would you believe. One of the country's top resorts, the Pearl of the Pacific Resort and Spa, together with Warner Music Philippines, will bring us fab events, *palanggas*.

On Feb. 2 and 3, watch the first island live concert of the queen of bossa nova, **Sitti**, and on Feb. 9 and 10, enjoy the music of Sino Sikat while enjoying the breeze by the sea.

On Feb. 14-16, all you lovers will enjoy the concert of Fairground.

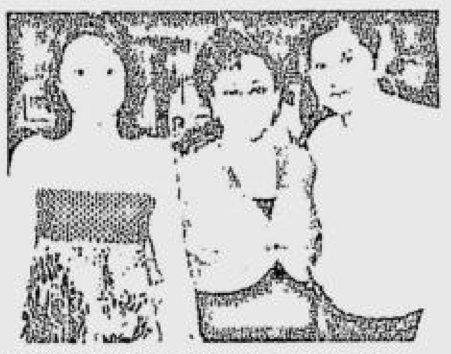
Check out this fantastic opportunity to enjoy paradise with the special package the resort offers with the special support of Moet Hennesy, Neo Island Spa, Island Salon, Island Weddings and Co., and Seair, dahlings.

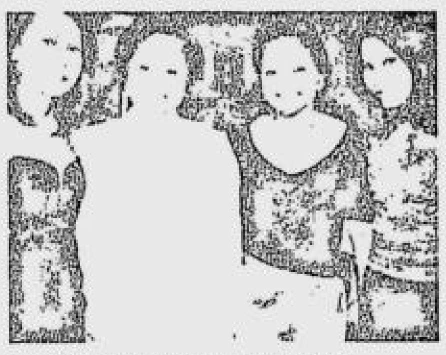
SUSIE Ortigas and Anita Carpo

JUSTA Tantoco

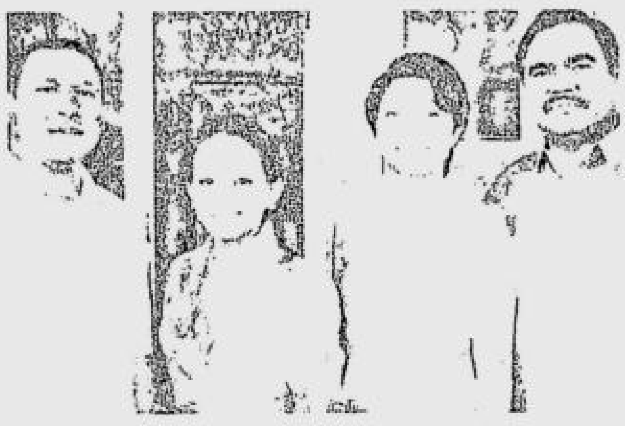
VIRGIE Barbers

CLOSE PALS: Nora Salazar, Telly Maclang, Naty Aventura and Sol Mendoza

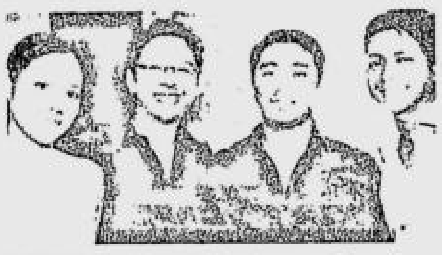

FUN PACK: Angelie Tan and mother-in-law Letty Tan, and Mons Romulo Tantoco


GLAM GALS: Agnes Huibonhoa, celebrator Lovely R., Daisy Payumo and Ching Cruz

UST professor Pepin Aguilar-Placido


NEGROS Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz, Iloilo's top hostess Sarah Opolencia Peña; vivacious Beverly P. Rosales and Tony Remollo

UNILEVER brand manager Franz Decloedt, and Geiser Maclang's Brad Geiser and Amor Maclang

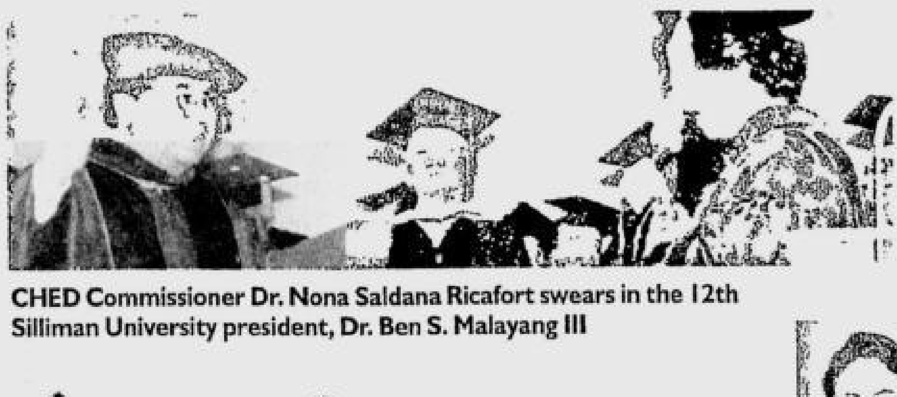

VANESA Pastor, RJ Ledesma, Francis Flores and Mario Lozano

SILLIMAN'S FIRST *FAMILLE*: Miharu Jay Malayang-Kimwell, Robert Jed Malayang, Doctor Malayang and wife Gladys Rio, and Aurafe Nayna Malayang

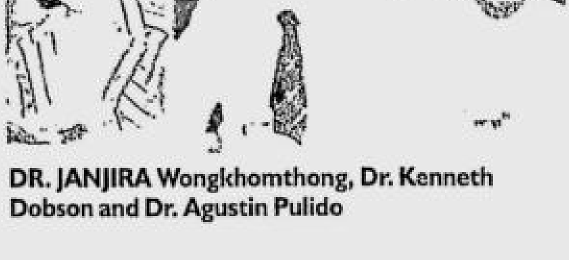
SINGING sisters Evelyn Aldecoa and Judge Jenny Lind Aldecoa-Delorino

COSMOPOLITAN's Ianne Evangelista, Mega's Vicky Tensuan, Flores and Metro Weddings' Romina Urra-Gonzales

HOST Mo Twister


CHED Commissioner Dr. Nona Saldana Ricafort swears in the 12th Silliman University president, Dr. Ben S. Malayang III

MALAYANG with Dr. Proceso Udarbe, Justice Venancio Aldecoa, Dr. Agustin Pulido, Dr. Betsy Joy Tan, Prof. Leonor Magtolis-Briones, lawyer Fema Sayson, Dr. Angel Alcala and Dr. Quintin Doromal


DR. JANJIRA Wongkhomthong, Dr. Kenneth Dobson and Dr. Agustin Pulido

FRANCISCO Sy-Bacang and Jornel Albarillo

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime Licauco

Biblical natural cures

IT WAS THE LATE SIR JASON WINTERS who first told me of passages in the Christian Bible that talked about healing using natural substances.

He cured himself of terminal throat and mouth cancer by researching herbs mentioned in the Bible. He said the Bible contained advice to eat certain fruits and their seeds to heal various illnesses.

Out of his desperate efforts to find a cure for his dreaded disease, he traveled to different continents and talked to rabbis and priests of different religions to identify the fruits and herbs mentioned in the Bible. No one could tell him.

But, by combining several natural plants with biblical references, he developed a tea that cured him of cancer. Doctors said it was a miracle. That tea is now sold all over the world as Sir Jason Winters Tea.

God's plan?

Could it be that it is God's plan that for every disease that afflicts humans, there is something in nature that will cure it?

For why should God allow a disease to emerge if there was no hope of curing it? It just doesn't make sense.

So even the so-called incurable modern illnesses—cancer, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (Aids), Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, arthritis or Ankylosing Spondylitis—must have a natural remedy. However, people have not yet discovered it.

Recently, I was reading the Catholic edition of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible and I came across a book in the Old Testament not found in other editions of the Bible. This is the book of Tobit, which is placed between the books of Nehemiah and Judith.

According to the introduction or commentary about this portion of the Old Testament, the Book of Tobit is "about a righteous Jew (named) Tobit, who is in exile in Nineveh, and Sarah, who is tortured by a demon in Media. God sends the Angel Raphael to help both Tobit and Sarah. Tobit's son, Tobias, goes with Raphael to Media, binds the demon, and marries Sarah."

Cataract treatment

But what struck me in the Book of Tobit, which was not mentioned in the above commentary, were certain passages in which the Angel Raphael gave Tobias specific instructions for treating cataract and for casting out demons using some internal organs of a big fish that tried to swallow Tobias in the Tigris River.

Chapter 6, verses 1-9, of Tobit describes the healing process in detail:

"The young man went out and the angel went with him. So they both journeyed along, and when the first night overtook them they camped by the Tigris River. Then the young man went down to wash his feet in the Tigris River.

"Suddenly, a large fish leaped up from the water and tried to swallow the young man's foot, and he cried out. But the angel said to the young man, 'Catch hold of the fish and hang on to it!' "So the young man grasped the fish and drew it up on the land.

"Then the angel said to him, 'Cut open the fish and take out its gall, heart and liver. Keep them with you, but throw away the intestines. For its gall, heart and liver are useful as medicine.' So after cutting open the fish the young man gathered together the gall, heart and liver; then he roasted and ate some of the fish, and kept some to be salted.

"The two continued on their way together until they were near Media. Then the young man questioned the angel and said to him, 'Brother Azariah, (that was the name the angel gave to him) what medicinal value is there in the fish's heart, and liver, and in the gall?'

"He replied, 'As for the fish's heart and liver, you must burn them to make a smoke in the presence of a man or woman afflicted by a demon or evil spirit, and every affliction will flee away and never remain with that person any longer. And as for the gall, anoint a person's eyes where white films have appeared on them; blow upon them, upon the white films, and the eyes will be healed.'"

From the above passage, we may gather that not only demonic possession, but also diseases or afflictions caused by evil spirits, can be cured by burning the fish's heart and liver.

Unfortunately, the Book of Tobit did not identify the fish that Tobias was instructed to catch but only that it was a big one.

From this we can theorize that, for every disease that afflicts humans, God has also laid out a cure from our natural environment. We only have to discover it.

(Note: For inquiries on books, paranormal services and seminars on Inner Mind Development, ESP and Intuition Development, and Soulmates, Karma & Reincarnation conducted by this writer, please call 8107245, 8926806, or fax 8159890. E-mail: innerawareness_2005@yahoo.com)

Even the so-called incurable modern illnesses like cancer and Aids may have a natural remedy that people have not yet discovered

Scientific sports and fitness courses

THE SCIENTIFIC SPORTS AND FITNESS Council of the Philippines (SSFC) will be conducting official certification and scientific training programs in various sports and fitness disciplines this year.

SSFC is composed of elite and internationally accredited sports and fitness scientists, together with the National Athletic Training and Fitness Academy (Natfa).

It will be offering certification and training courses in coaching, strength and conditioning, athletic training, personal training, functional training, athletic taping, plyometrics, speed and agility, sports rehab, sports nutrition, sports psychology, and many more.

The activity is in response to the lack of a modern, academic and scientific training institution for sports and fitness practioners in the country.

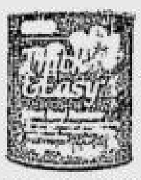
Heading the list of SSFC instructors are founding members Jose Jimbo Saret, MS Athletic Training, Brigham Young University; Luigi Bercades, MS Exercise Physiology, University of Oregon; Tina Juan, ACE exercise leader; Sebastian Ripol, MS Sports Science, University of Sydney; and Dave Bercades, MS Sports Medicine, University of Oregon.

The SSFC certification courses were designed specially for those interested in pursuing a professional career in the field of sports and fitness. They will provide participants proper scientific background and training skills needed to succeed in their chosen fields.

Courses have progressive levels to cater to professionals of different skills and abilities.

The program will start Feb. 3 with the five-day (Saturday, Sunday) Fitness Training Certification Course (Level 1). The program is ideal for noncertified fitness instructors and individuals whether currently practicing or are interested to be in the business.

Call 9288163.



Why a surgeon recommends Thick & Easy for swallowing disorders

As a surgeon specializing in head and neck injuries, Dr. William L. Lim of St. Luke's Medical Center has seen it all – from tumors to paralysis of the vocal cords to gunshot wounds to the neck. Often these injuries affect a patient's ability to swallow.

For years, Dr. Lim recommended commercially prepared thickeners to thicken and stabilize the consistency of food and drinks. This allows patients with impaired throat muscles to better control the food in their mouth. Unfortunately, thickeners were not widely available in the Philippines.

"Hirap na hirap kami noon! (We had such a hard time before!)," Dr. Lim confessed. "Pinabibilipbayon sa States. (It had to be bought in the States)." He smiled. "Or you could use gawgaw (laundry starch)."

When Fresenius Kabi, the leader of infusion therapy and clinical nutrition in Europe, introduced the thickener Thick & Easy in the Philippines, Dr. Lim could only exclaim, "Mabuti na lang! (Thank goodness!)"

He said that he used to prescribe generic thickeners but now, "I recommend Thick and Easy because it's readily available here," he said.

And just as the doctor ordered, Fresenius Kabi is offering three sample packets of Thick & Easy via hotline 8896492 loc.123.

Unlike proxy thickeners like gelatin, Thick & Easy makes it easy for both doctors and patients to adjust the consistency of the food, depending on the patient's own pace of recovery.

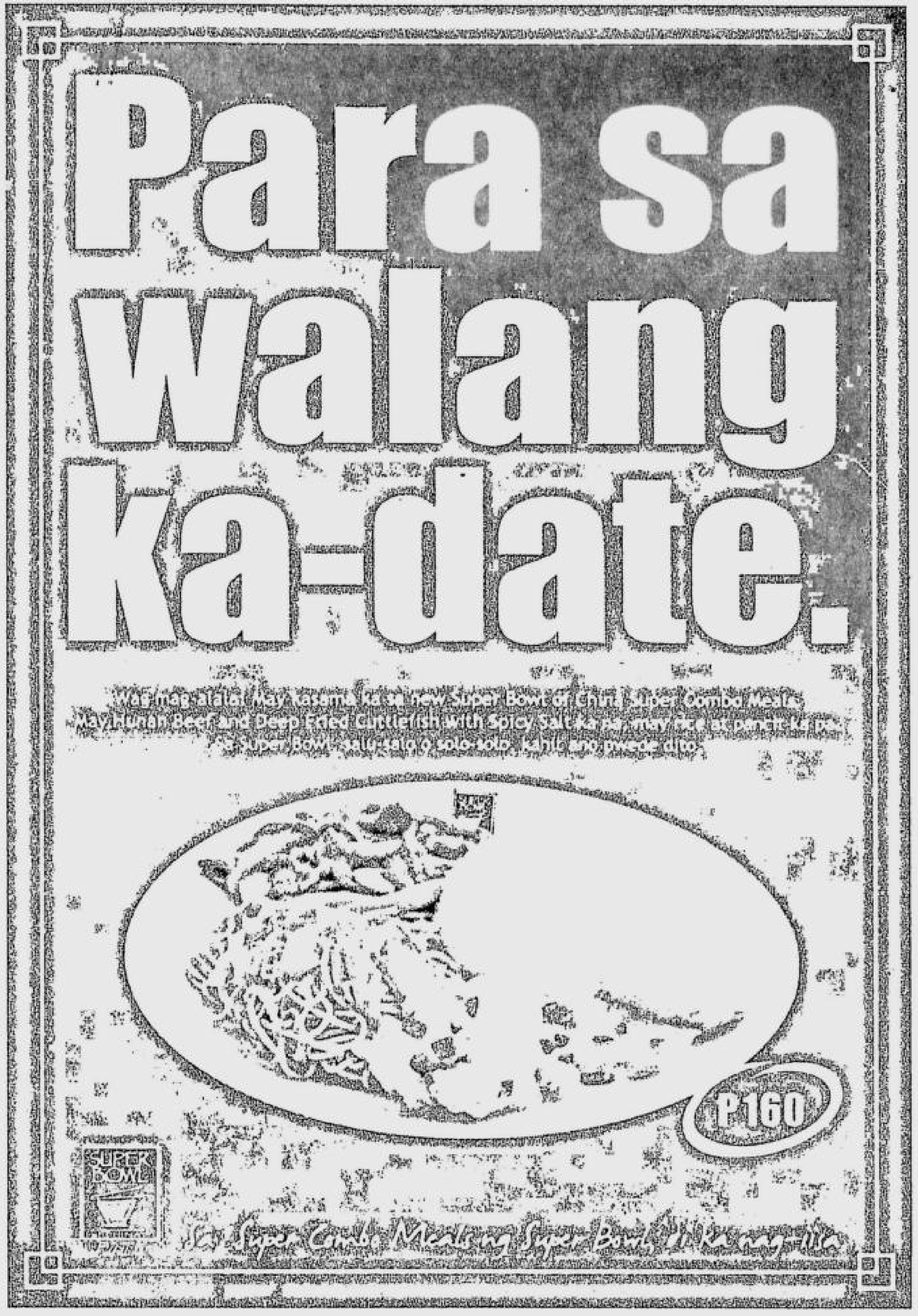
Thick & Easy is also versatile. Dr. Lim recalls a patient who put Thick & Easy on everything he ate and drank including "Coke and Gatorade!" Otherwise, he said, the patient would aspirate. Aspiration is a condition resulting from the entrance of foreign material, usually food particles, into the lungs instead of the esophagus. It can be fatal.

"So to avert that, the liquid should be thicker," he said. "Kasi ang pinakamahirap lunukin kung paralyzed yung vocal cords mo yung liquid.... Wala yung reflex na magsasara ng vocal cords so kapag liquid mas prone na magpunta sa lungs. (Liquids are the most difficult to swallow when your vocal cords are paralyzed.... The reflex that closes the vocal cords is impaired so liquids are more prone to enter the lungs.)"

In order to help patients avoid aspiration, Dr. Lim advises patients to put thickeners like Thick and Easy on liquids they can't handle. "In that way, they regain their ability to eat."

By calling hotline 8896492 loc.123, you can receive three sample packets of Thick & Easy to see for yourself how it makes eating and drinking so much simpler for patients with swallowing disorders, including stroke patients and those with head and neck injuries, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, motor neuron diseases and cerebral palsy.

As Dr. Lim says, "Recovery depends on how the body heals itself. Keep healthy!" Thick & Easy makes it easier than ever before.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Wag mag-alala! May kasama ka sa new Super Bowl of China Super Combo Meals.
May Hunan Beef and Deep Fried Cuttlefish with Spicy Salt ka na, may [illegible]
sa Super Bowl, [illegible] o solo-solo, kahit ano pwede dito.
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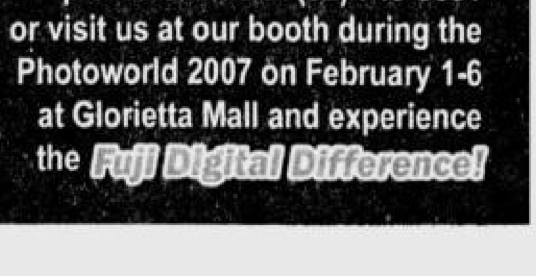

For more information, please call us at (02) 743-6601 or visit us at our booth during the Photoworld 2007 on February 1-6 at Glorietta Mall and experience the Fuji Digital Difference!

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God's way of drawing us closer

By Malu T. Ortiz
Contributor

DOWN SYNDROME WAS a term alien to me back in 1987.

Though some people think having a child with Down Syndrome (DS) brings good luck, in the Philippines, you rarely see these kids in public places.

You do not see them on television and, when you bring them to the mall or the church, people often stare at them. That is because they are different. They are not like us.

But I praise God that Philippine society is changing its attitude toward DS, thanks in large measure to the efforts of the Down Syndrome Association of the Philippines (DSAP).

From a few concerned parents in 1991, the association has grown as more parents found the courage to admit they have a special child.

Why me?

Coping with marital problems, I temporarily lived in San Francisco while I was pregnant. Four months later, Clarissa was born with Down Syndrome. She was deaf, mute, physically handicapped and bipolar (a mood disorder). She had a round face, chinky eyes, small nose, deformed ears, low muscle tone and a shorter left leg.

I was devastated and became even more depressed. I could not understand what I did wrong. I asked God, "Why me?"

I could not get over the pain. I was still hurting from my separation. I searched for God, cried and prayed to Him even as I sought professional help from counselors. Still I could not seem to find the answer to my problems.

The following day, at the hospital, I accidentally overheard a doctor talking to a couple across from my room. He said he was sorry they lost their baby.

I realized it was no accident I heard this news. God let me hear it so I would be thankful that my child was very much alive and healthy.

I was reminded by the passage in the Bible, Jeremiah 29:11-14, when the Lord said, "For I know the plans I have for you… plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me and when you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you."

I realized that Clarissa was not accidentally born with Down Syndrome. The Lord purposely gave her to us because it was His way of drawing us closer to Him.

An instrument

Clarissa is an instrument, an angel sent by God. Through her, our character is being molded and we are becoming better people. I learned the true meaning of unconditional love, perseverance and patience. Clarissa is a blessing from God. Through her, we are drawn closer to the Lord.

When I told my husband about Clarissa's condition, he asked me to come home as soon as possible. We reconciled and, by God's grace, we became better parents.

Clarissa has been a blessing to us, not only because she unites the family, but also because our faith in God has deepened. Despite her condition, we have not lost hope and we believe that one day she will be able to speak.

She is now almost 20 years old and the speech therapist has given up on her. A similar story in the Bible tells us that when Jesus was asked who sinned, the blind man who was born blind or his parents, He replied: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:2-3).

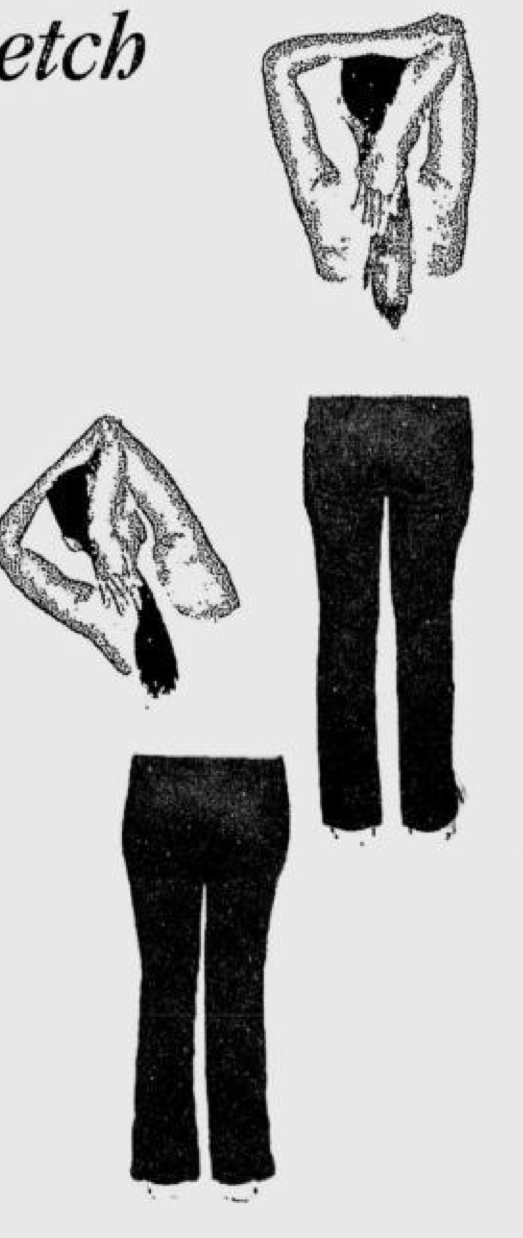
Last year, Clarissa spoke on two occasions. She said "Papa!" Truly, God is faithful to His words. With Him, nothing is impossible.

ALOHA. Clarissa with mom Malu at her Hawaiian-themed 18th birthday party

CLIP & SAVE

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Triceps and torso stretch



THIS MULTIPURPOSE EXERCISE stretches the triceps (back of the arms) as well as the muscles at the sides of the torso.

Equipment

None

Exercise technique

1. Raise both arms above your head. Reach for the middle of your back with your right hand. Keep your right elbow pointing to the ceiling and use your left hand to pull your elbow gently toward the center of your body. You should feel a stretch in the back of your arm.

2. Maintaining the position of your arms and shoulders, gently bend toward the left side until you feel a stretch in the side of your body.

3. Hold the stretch for the desired length of time.

4. Repeat on the other side.

Performance tips

1. If you have lower back problems, ask your doctor's advice before doing this stretch.

2. Keep your knees slightly bent and your abdominal muscles tight to avoid overarching your lower back while you are doing the stretch.

3. Only bend far enough to feel a gentle stretch at the side of your body.

4. Keep breathing as you hold the stretch.

Repetitions

Hold for 10-30 seconds.

WELL AND GOOD
Tina Juan

Your office as gym

YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT BUT YOUR office is secretly a fitness center. You read it right. Even if your company doesn't have a gym on the premises, you can get in shape while you work.

With the right knowledge and planning, you can do a complete fitness program without compromising your work. In fact, you will become more productive, alert and focused.

A balanced fitness program has three components—aerobic exercise (for the heart and lungs), strength training (for muscles) and stretching (for joints).

The secret to doing all three types of exercise at work without losing your job is to do them in short brief sessions of five to 10 minutes.

Research has proven that accumulating snippets of exercise through the day is as effective for general fitness and weight loss as doing continuous exercise.

Plan

For your office workout to be successful, you need good organizational skills, an attribute that office people already have. How else can they be effective at work? So use those skills to make yourself healthier, slimmer, stronger and shapelier.

Since you will be doing short exercise sessions sporadically throughout the day, you need a way to be reminded and a way to keep track of what you have to do.

Devise your own reminder system—cell phone or computer alarms, post-it notes, etc. To document and track your program, use a PDA (personal digital assistant), excel forms, or go low-tech with a small notebook.

List down your exercises and check them off as you do them. At a glance, you will see what exercises you still have to do for that day or how many more short sessions of walking you need.

Aerobic exercise

Your goal is to accumulate 30-60 minutes a day by walking or stair-climbing. Slow walking is like strolling in the mall. It burns about 3.5 calories per minute. Brisk walking is walking as if you are late for an important meeting. It uses up about 5-6 calories per minute.

Take the stairs instead of the elevator or the escalator. Ask yourself: "When was the last time I used the stairs when I was only going from the first to the second floor?" Stair-climbing burns eight calories a minute.

Use your own two legs to deliver messages from one department of your office to another so the office messenger does not get all the health benefits of walking around.

If you drive to work, park your car farther away than you usually do. When doing errands after work, park at the end opposite your destination. Walk briskly without stopping to look at the store windows until you have accumulated the desired minutes, then slow down and do your window-shopping.

When going to lunch, try to find a restaurant that is within walking distance. Take the longest route you can think of to go there and back.

A pedometer, a device that counts your steps, is very useful if you don't want the hassle of tracking the time spent walking or stair-climbing. Aim for 10,000-15,000 steps a day. Pedometers can be bought at some drugstores and sporting goods stores.

Strength training

Small equipment like dumbbells, ankle weights, and exercise rubber bands can be easily kept under your desk and are very effective in firming up your muscles for a shapelier you. Try to do one or two exercises per hour. This should only take a few minutes. There won't even be a hint of perspiration on your brow when you finish so don't worry about being hot and sweaty.

For exercise ideas, go to www.tinajuanfitness.info and look under "exercises." For a balanced approach, choose one exercise per body part. You can choose more for your problem areas. The only exercises you cannot do at the office are for the abdominals and lower back because you need to lie down on a mat to do them. You can do these exercises at home before or after work.

Stretching

Stretching keeps you supple and flexible and helps you avoid aches and pains associated with long hours of working at the computer. To keep things simple, do a stretch right after you do your hourly strength training exercises. If you did a chest strengthening exercise, do a chest stretch.

Group exercise

It is more motivating to exercise with other people. Start your own "group" by getting one or two officemates to commit to doing hourly exercises at the same time at your desks. You don't have to do the exact same exercises if you have different goals (you want firmer arms, she wants shapelier thighs), but it's more fun if you have company. If you are shy, you won't feel so "silly" working out by yourself.

Note: The Scientific Sports and Fitness Council, together with the National Athletic Training and Fitness Academy, will hold a Fitness Training Certification Course (Level 1) starting Feb. 3. Call Merlyn at 9288163.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

More healthful salt now available

FILIPINO HEALTH BUFFS WHO FIND it difficult to avoid salt can get a more healthful alternative in Pansalt.

Rich in magnesium and potassium, the salt which has become popular in Europe, including the United Kingdom, and Asia and the Pacific, including Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Australia, is now available locally.

The mineral salt that is imported from Finland cuts sodium chloride by 56 percent and has the best taste profile among low-sodium salts in the market and has no bitter aftertaste.

Pansalt's patented formula has given it the same flavor as common salt, minus the excess sodium chloride. Studies suggest it improves the therapeutic effects of drugs used in the treatment of high blood pressure, and may not have the harmful effects characteristic of common salt.

Medical research has indicated that too much salt in a person's diet increases the risk of developing high blood pressure and can lead to complications like strokes, heart attacks, kidney damage, and possibly asthma and some cancers.

The problem may be caused by high levels of sodium chloride in ordinary salt.

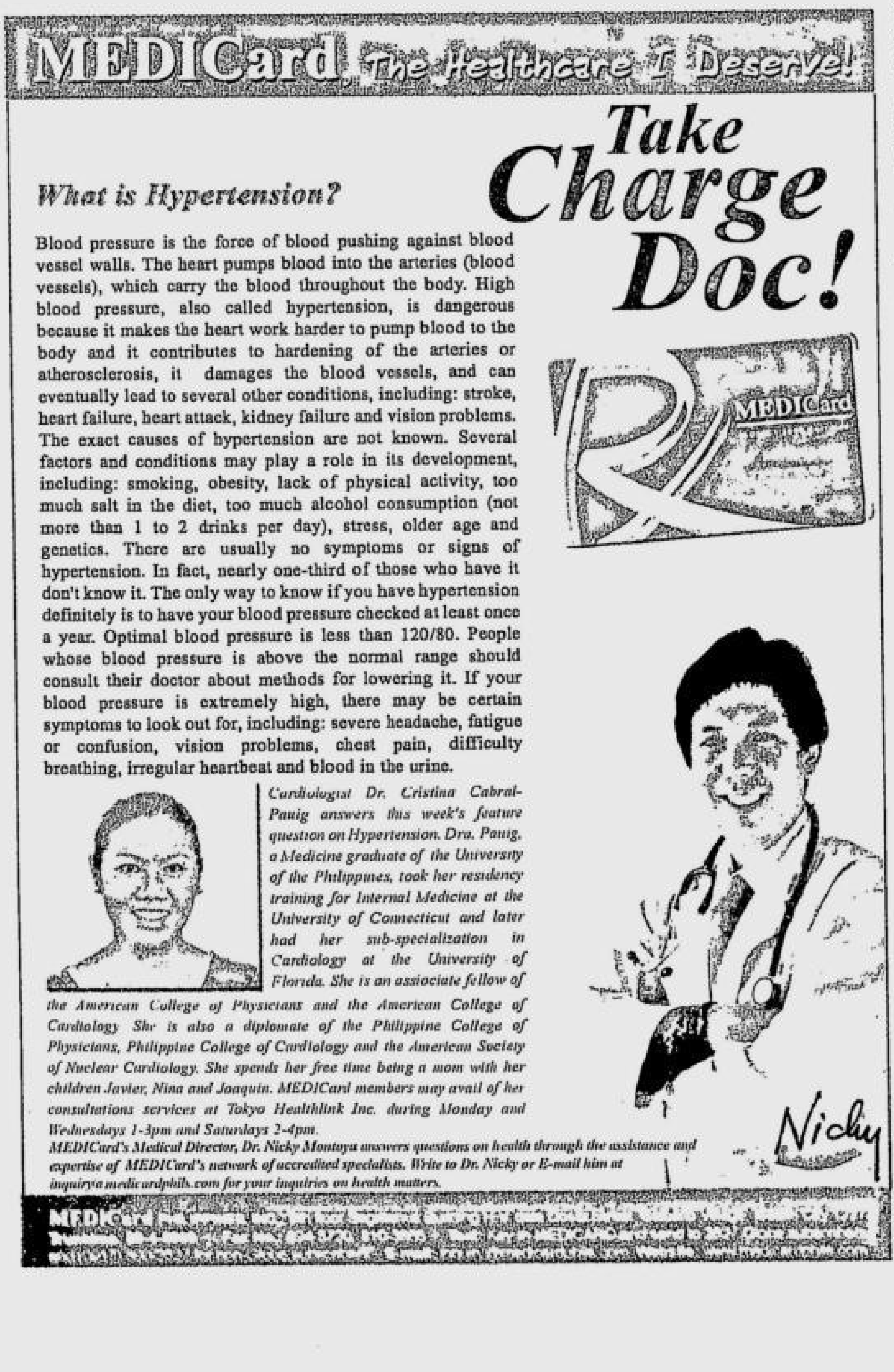
Accord International Inc., importers of Pansalt, shares the following recipe with our readers. Pansalt is available at Alabang Supermarket, Pioneer Center, Sta. Lucia East Supermarket, Tropical Hut, Unimart, Cherry Foodarama (Antipolo, Congressional, Shaw), and all Watsons branches.

OYSTER a la Monique

Oyster a la Monique

(*Serves 4*)
28 fresh oysters
½ cup lemon sherbet
5 tbsp roasted tomatoes (recipe follows)
2 tbsp fish roe (*ebiko*)
1½ sheet of roasted seaweeds (Japanese sushi nori), cut into thin strips and deep fried
12 lemon wedges
Parsley sprig for garnish
Dash of Pansalt

Shuck and clean oysters retaining the large half of the shell. Arrange the oysters on a bed of crushed ice, and top with lemon sherbet, followed by roasted tomatoes, fish roe and fried roasted seaweeds. Serve with lemon wedges on the side. Garnish with parsley spring and sprinkle with Pansalt.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What is Hypertension?

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. The heart pumps blood into the arteries (blood vessels), which carry the blood throughout the body. High blood pressure, also called hypertension, is dangerous because it makes the heart work harder to pump blood to the body and it contributes to hardening of the arteries or atherosclerosis, it damages the blood vessels, and can eventually lead to several other conditions, including: stroke, heart failure, heart attack, kidney failure and vision problems. The exact causes of hypertension are not known. Several factors and conditions may play a role in its development, including: smoking, obesity, lack of physical activity, too much salt in the diet, too much alcohol consumption (not more than 1 to 2 drinks per day), stress, older age and genetics. There are usually no symptoms or signs of hypertension. In fact, nearly one-third of those who have it don't know it. The only way to know if you have hypertension definitely is to have your blood pressure checked at least once a year. Optimal blood pressure is less than 120/80. People whose blood pressure is above the normal range should consult their doctor about methods for lowering it. If your blood pressure is extremely high, there may be certain symptoms to look out for, including: severe headache, fatigue or confusion, vision problems, chest pain, difficulty breathing, irregular heartbeat and blood in the urine.

Cardiologist Dr. Cristina Cabral-Paulg answers this week's feature question on Hypertension. Dra. Paulg, a Medicine graduate of the University of the Philippines, took her residency training for Internal Medicine at the University of Connecticut and later had her sub-specialization in Cardiology at the University of Florida. She is an associate fellow of the American College of Physicians and the American College of Cardiology. She is also a diplomate of the Philippine College of Physicians, Philippine College of Cardiology and the American Society of Nuclear Cardiology. She spends her free time being a mom with her children Javier, Nina and Joaquin. MEDICard members may avail of her consultations services at Tokyo Healthlink Inc. during Monday and Wednesdays 1-3pm and Saturdays 2-4pm.

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky

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More Brad

Brad is a great dad

Guess who's being quoted...

CHEER FACTOR

...by US fan mag In Touch? INQUIRER Entertainment, that's who! In its January issue, the magazine published a story on reigning Hollywood royalty Angelia Jolie and Brad Pitt. The story (see photo) picked up a portion of Ruben Nepales' column published on Dec. 22 and 24 referring to the couple's plans for raising a family of their own. In Touch read it first here!

Lea is 'Cinderella' on Asian tour '08

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

FILIPINO SINGER-ACTRESS LEA Salonga will play "Cinderella" on the Asian tour of the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical of the same name.

This was reported in playbill.com and broadwayworld.com and was confirmed by Lea.

The tour, which takes the Tony-winning star to mainland China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, premieres in Manila between June and August next year.

Lea will join the "Cinderella" tour after her Broadway comeback as Fantine in "Les Misérables," which starts on March 6.

The "Cinderella" musical is based on a TV special that starred Julie Andrews in the title role. Aired by CBS in 1957, the special is considered "the most widely watched program in the medium's history," having attracted 107 million viewers.

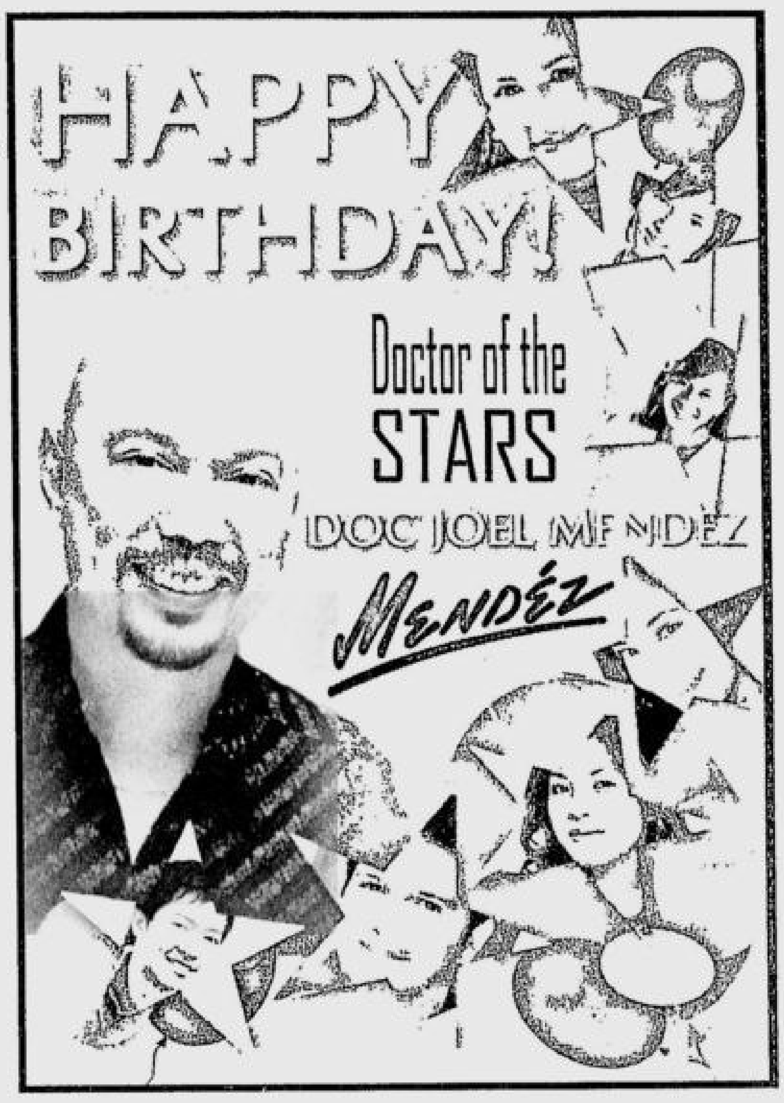
Subsequent versions, also on TV, featured Lesley Ann Warren (1965) and Brandy (1997) as the chimney sweeper-turned-princess.

The significance of portraying a role originated by her idol Julie Andrews is not lost on the Filipina.

Lea worked with Dame Julie in a 1992 recording of another Rodgers & Hammerstein musical "The King and I." (Julie was Anna; Lea, Tuptim; and Ben Kingsley, the King.)

"Cinderella is not one of (Julie's) iconic roles like 'The Sound of Music,' but it will be interesting. I know I'll have a good time," Lea tells INQUIRER Entertainment. "The version I am familiar with is the one with Brandy and (Filipino-American actor) Paolo Montalban (Prince

LEA/ D2



Twists and tales at 'Bubble Gang' resto

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

I HAD a blast with Ogie Alcasid at his Bubble Gang Toppings, located at the second floor of the FBR Bldg. in Katipunan, across Ateneo. He and his "Bubble Gang" co-stars and their cool PR, Allan Tom, have added a twist to the resto.

"We are now an eatery by day and a bar by night," says Ogie. "Wednesday is 'Celebrity Night' and we have guest DJs. We want celebrity friends to have a place to chill, no paparazzi and all. We will also throw birthday parties for celebrities, with open bar from 9 to 11 p.m. It's open to the public, too, at P100 entrance."

That night I spotted Pauleen Luna, Mark Herras, Ruffa Mae Quinto, Janno Gibbs, Bing Loyzaga, Regine Velasquez, Jolina Magdangal, Epi and Boy2 Quizon, John Estrada, Raymond Gutierrez, Nadia Montenegro, Ara Mina, Michelle Madrigal, Andrew Wolff and Will Devaughn.

Pauleen poured her heart out to me. She's devastated after her breakup with Marvin Agustin. To lighten the mood, I teased her to ask advice from Jolens because she knows Marvs inside out. Jolens chuckled. *"Di naman naging kami ni* Marvs."

Pauleen admits that she and Marvs still love each other. But sometimes one kind of love gives way to another. Pauleen had to give in to her parents. "They are not *naman* against Marvin. They just feel it's not the right time for us. Someday maybe we will get back together. But I don't believe in waiting."

It's not true that Angel Locsin caused the split-up. I was beside Pauleen when she called Angel to check how Marvs was coping. Angel was with Marvin in Baguio taping for "Asian Treasures."

Regine sat quietly sipping her Bloody Mary. It's obvious that no special event in Ogie's life would ever be complete without Regine around. Boy 2 kept pouring their house drink "Romansa" for anyone who passed his way. Nadia, Ogie and John played poker. Mark, Pauleen and I had a few tequila shots. "To the wounds that never heal!," I told Pauleen.

Epi ribbed Boy 2 for imitating his hairstyle. It was cool to see Janno and Bing partying like long lost friends instead of estranged lovers. Michelle and Pauleen ignored each other. Apparently, their long-standing gap because of JC de Vera ain't over.

Ruffa Mae would rather spare us the gory details of her "fling" with Bong Revilla, although she was alarmed when her name got dragged into the Lani-Greta-Bong controversy. All in all, it was one fantastic night. Ogie's gang really knows how to keep a party bubbling with fun.

F.Y.I. (For Your Indulgence)

- I texted Marvin Agustin that I'm sad for him and Pauleen. It's an awful timing for a breakup—his birthday is coming up. He texted back: "No plans for my birthday. *Buti na lang* I have taping for 'Asian Treasures.' I'm in no mood to celebrate. Pray for us."

What good are all the treasures without his heart's treasure?

- Dennis Trillo is relieved that he has made peace with Mother Lily. They had a falling out when his role in "Mano Po 5" was given to Richard Gutierrez.

"New year, new start. Mother kept saying sorry. I gave her flowers. She cried. *Walang katapusang yakapan. Parang eksena sa* movie! I kept quiet on the issue for three months *kasi kahit may sama ako ng loob, mas matindi pa rin yung utang na loob ko kay* Mother." Just as his first single from his debut album

TWISTS/ D2

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12:20 / 3:20 / 6:20 / 9:20
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12:20 / 3:20 / 6:20 / 9:20
AGENT X-44
00 / 3.10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40
SAW 3
12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50
DEJAVU
1:20 / 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50
DOLBY DIGITAL-EX
ERAGON
2:10 / 4:40 / 7:10 / 9:40
THE BLOOD DIAMOND
1:05 / 4:00 / 6:55 / 9:50
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
1:35 / 4:05 / 6:35 / 9:05

AliMALL 5

AGENT X-44
11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35
ROB-B-HOOD
1:00 / 3:30 / 6:00 / 8:30
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
12:15 / 2:55 / 5:35 / 8.15
LITTLE CHILDREN
11:30 / 2:30 / 5:30 / 8:30
DEJAVU
12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30
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CRYSTAL REYES

Little Crystal lives her fondest dream

By Nini Valera

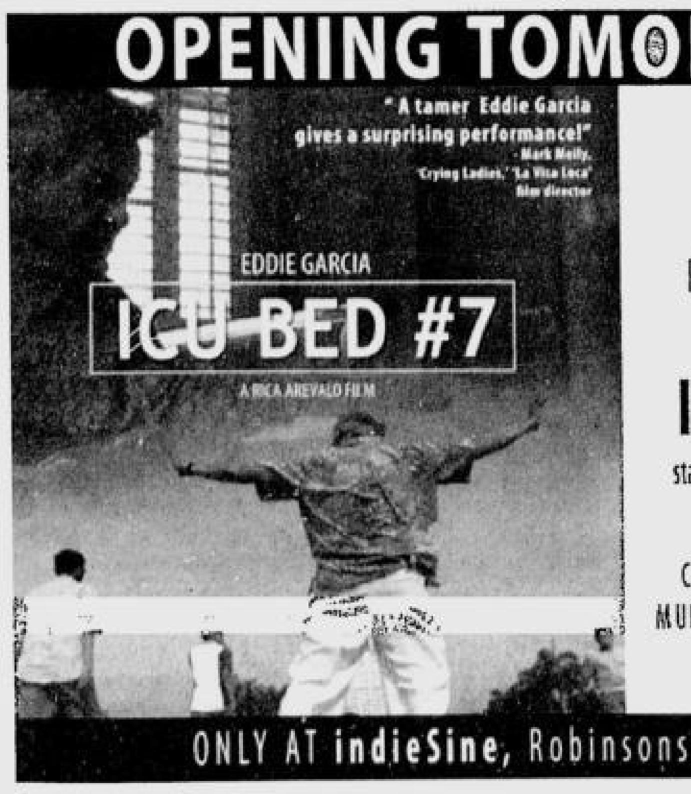
SHE WANTS TO BE A doctor someday, but for now, Crystal Reyes is living her early dream of becoming a child actress.

The 10-year-old fourth grader at the Grace Christian Academy in Bulacan has been cast in a lead role on GMA 7's "Princess Charming," a tearjerker about two girls' search for love and belonging.

Playing Charming to Crystal's Princess is another child actress, Eunice Lagusad.

LITTLE/ D2

OPENING TOMORROW !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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 DEJA VU • THX
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 indieSine's Digital Cinema Bagong Agos Film Festival

4 BABEL
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

5 LITTLE CHILDREN
1:30 4:20 7:10 10:00

6 SAW 3
12:00MF 2:30 5:00LMF

7 ERAGON
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

8 BLOOD DIAMOND
12:40 3:40 6:40 9:40

9 ROB-B-HOOD
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

10 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

ERMITA 636-7809 to 12

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

2 ROB-B-HOOD 12:00 2:50
SAW 3 5:20 7:35 9:50

3 BABEL
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

4 DEJA VU
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

5 LITTLE CHILDREN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

6 AGENT X44
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

7 BLOOD DIAMOND 12:00 2:40
ERAGON 5:30 7:45 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 ROB-B-HOOD
1:10 3:40 6:20 9:00

2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
1:15 3:50 6:25 9:00

3 AGENT X44
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

4 DEJA VU
12:45 3:30 6:15 9:00

5 SAW 3
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

6 LITTLE CHILDREN
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

7 ERAGON
12:00 2:15 4:30 6:45 9:00

8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
1:40 4:10 6:40 9:10

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 DEJA VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 AGENT X44
4 SAW 3

PIONEER 687-3370

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
1:15 3:45 6:15 8:40

2 BABEL
11:40 2:30 5:20 8:10

3 AGENT X44
1:40 4:00 6:20 8:40

4 LITTLE CHILDREN
11:40 2:30 5:20 8:10

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MTRCB Rating: R18

january 24 - 30

Set in the minefields of modern suburbia, this film follows several inhabitants of a small American town as they fumble their way through adulthood. Numb-to-life housewife and mother Sarah Pierce (Kate Winslet) finds an outlet for her yearning in gorgeous househusband Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson), who is crippled with insecurity over the fact that his perfect wife, Kathy (Jennifer Connely), is the family breadwinner.

When Sarah and Brad meet at the local playground one afternoon, a passionate affair is sparked. In a further attempt to reclaim his youthful fire, Brad joins a night football league with Larry Hedges (Noah Emmerich), a former cop who has begun to harass a convicted sex offender, Ronnie J. McGorvey (Jackie Earle Haley). The troubled lives eventually collide, causing each individual to take full responsibility for their not-so-responsible actions. It is bitingly funny and nakedly honest critique of middle class dysfunction.

For Screening Schedule, please contact our Cinema Access: 635-5555 or visit us: www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

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Jennifer Connelly
Patrick Wilson

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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4 KAMASUTRA 3
5 AGENT X44

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2 AGENT X44
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 SPIRIT TRAP
5 SAW 3

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1 AGENT X44
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 SAW 3
4 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 AGENT X44
3 KAMASUTRA 3
4 A GOOD YEAR

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1 DEJA VU
2 SAW 3
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 AGENT X44

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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 KAMASUTRA 3
3 AGENT X44
4 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
5 SAW 3
6 A GOOD YEAR

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2 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
3 AGENT X44
4 DEJA VU
5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

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3 SHAOLIN VS. EVIL DEAD 2
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5 BORAT
6 SAW 3

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2 BLOOD DIAMOND
3 BABEL
4 BLOOD DIAMOND
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
6 AGENT X44

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NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

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CINEMA 1
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
CINEMA 2
BABEL
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2 GRIFFIN & PHOENIX
3 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
4 BABEL
BABEL
DEJA VU
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
AGENT X44
ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
ROB-B-HOOD
ERAGON
BLOOD DIAMOND

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6 AGENT X44
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
9 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
10 AGENT X44
11 ROB-B-HOOD
12 ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749

ERAGON
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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RESERVED
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
ROB-B-HOOD
AGENT X44
DEJA VU
BLOOD DIAMOND
AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH

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GRIDIRON GANG

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ERAGON
AGENT X44
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
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AGENT X44
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BABEL
ERAGON
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
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AGENT X44
ERAGON

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DEJA VU
BABEL
ERAGON
ROB-B-HOOD
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES
AGENT X44
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ERAGON
AGENT X44
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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DEJA VU
AGENT X44
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ARTHUR AND THE INVISIBLES

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A GOOD YEAR
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
AGENT X44
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KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
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SPIRIT TRAP
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DEJA VU
AGENT X44

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SPIRIT TRAP
KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

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AGENT X44
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Lea…

From page D1

Charming)."

The "Cinderella" Asian tour is being mounted by Broadway Asia Entertainment which, according to its web site, is the exclusive theatrical representative for the Rodgers & Hammerstein Theater Library in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Lea says her good friend, Bobby Garcia, is directing "Cinderella." Rehearsals start in Manila in mid-2008.

Little …

From page D1

"Eunice is my idol," Crystal tells INQUIRER Entertainment. "She can cry easily."

The girls, now good friends, first met on the set of "Bakekang."

Crystal recalls, "At first, we were both shy. Then one time, Eunice brought a Barbie doll and asked me to play with her."

Like most little girls, Crystal is hooked on Barbie. "I have five of them." But unlike most girls, "I buy them with my own money."

She remembers, "Before, when we were in the mall and I wanted to buy a toy, my mother would say we had no money. It's different now."

But most of her earnings, she says, are kept in the bank, since she wants to buy a car and save for the future.

Despite the prime time exposure on TV, Crystal says she does not feel like a star. "My classmates treat me like an ordinary student," she says. "They only ask me to bring them to my tapings. I think they're proud of me."

How does an "ordinary girl" summon emotions for her role? "I just imagine that all the bad things happening to Princess are happening to me," she says. "Then the tears come easy."

Twists & tales …

From page D1

now being played on radio declares—"All Out of Love."

Lea inspired

Before Lea Salonga leaves for her much-awaited Broadway comeback in "Les Miserables" next month, the country's pride pays tribute to her local followers with a collection of timeless songs, "Inspired," under Sony BMG. It's a product of her collaboration with her brother, Maestro Gerard Salonga, and her first studio album in seven years.

Among the 12 tracks are Lea's personal favorites like "Promise Me," "Land of the Loving" and her wedding song, "Two Words." She couldn't have chosen a better title for the album. It best describes her as a mother and world-class artist.

"I hum Nicole to sleep. Funny even when I'm not carrying her, I find myself swaying," Lea reveals. "It's become automatic. After giving birth, singing was such an ordeal. My body had to recover and adjust."

The high that motherhood gives her is higher than the highest notes in her vocal range. "Breastfeeding is heaven! It's nature's way of helping moms get back into shape after giving

TWISTS/ D3

Twists and tales at 'Bubble Gang' resto

From page D2

birth. That's how I lost weight. And it's incredible bonding time for Nic and me. When she starts going to school, I have to stay put in one place. I'd like her to study in Manila. I don't want her to grow up hating me for being away because of my work. I want to be around for all the milestones in her life. I'm willing to sacrifice career opportunities for her sake."

Lea doesn't want to dream Nicole's dreams for her. "I want her to decide what she wants to do with her life. I won't pressure her to be something she's not. I don't want her to be a woman at 10. I want her to grow up at her own pace."

Can hardly believe that our little "Annie" has her own little one. Lea's now living the wonderful "Tomorrow" she used to sing about. Her worldwide success continues to inspire us to have better a tomorrow, too.

OPM's Gold Find

PAULEEN LUNA

"Pinoy Dream Academy" Grand Star Dreamer Yeng Constantino is all set to prove her worth as Dream Big Productions and Star Records releases her debut album, "Salamat." It consists of 10 tracks (seven are her own compositions). Included are "Bulag Pipi at Bingi," "Hawak Kamay" and "Awit ng Pangarap."

"Salamat" gives a glimpse of the bright future that awaits her. YEY Yeng!

M-Gage launch

Viva Records new boy group M-Gage will have its grand launch tomorrow, 9 p.m. at Metrobar West Ave. The gorgeous band members are Saj Hufalar, Craig Alcantara, Joe Armas, Orlando Sol and Blumark Roces.

Among the featured guests are Alma Moreno, Rannie Raymundo, Viva Hotbabes and Yul Servo. The show is directed by Maryo J. de los Reyes no less.

Call 3724505 or 09184274047 and catch M-Gage's engaging music!

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1	DÉJÀ VU 2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:05 PG-13
2	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 1:25, 3:50, 6:15, 8:40, 11:05 G
3	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30 G
4	LITTLE CHILDREN 2:20, 5:20, 8:20, 11:10 R-18

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BLOOD DIAMOND R13 12:50,3:50,6:50,9:50	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM G 1:00,3:30,6:00,8:30	BABEL PG13 2:00,4:50,7:40,10:30
DÉJÀ VU PG13 1:15,4:00,6:45,9:30	LITTLE CHILDREN R18 2:30,5:10,7:50	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM G 12:30,3:00,5:30, 8:00,10:30

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① LITTLE CHILDREN
MTRCB R-18
1:00, 4:00

③ NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
MTRCB GP
12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00

② BABEL
MTRCB PG-13
12:35, 3:25, 6:15, 9:05

④ DÉJÀ VU
MTRCB PG-13
2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00

PREMIERE THEATRE
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
MTRCB GP
1:30, 3:55, 6:20, 8:45

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CINEMA 2	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 10:30 , 1:20 , 4:10 7:00 , 9:50 GP	

PROMENADE GREENHILLS
NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 3	LITTLE CHILDREN 11:00 , 1:50 , 4:40 7:30 , 10:25 R-18
CINEMA 4	BABEL 10:30 , 1:25 , 4:25 7:25 , 10:25 PG - 13
CINEMA 5	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 11:10 , 2:00 , 4:50 7:40 , 10:30 GP

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722-4496

MUSIC MUSEUM

Jan. 23 , 2007	Marissa Sanchez	8:30 PM
Feb. 02 & 03 , 2007	Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby	8:30 PM
Feb. 7 & 8 , 2007	Agot Isidro "Back to Basics"	8:30 PM
Feb 13 & 14 , 2007	Ogie Alcasid	8:00 PM

T·E·A·T·I·N·O PROMENADE GREENHILLS

EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
JAN. 23 , 30 , 2007	DYORDS KO PO	8:30 PM
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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 ERAGON	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	3 BABEL	4 AGENT X44
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 BABEL	2 DÉJÀ VU	3 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 INNOCENT VOICES	5 STRANGER THAN FICTION	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	7 LITTLE CHILDREN
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 BABEL	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX BABEL GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 STRANGER THAN FICTION GUARANTEED SEATS	4 LITTLE CHILDREN GUARANTEED SEATS	5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BABEL		
	3 LITTLE CHILDREN	4 AGENT X44	5 DÉJÀ VU	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS	3 ERAGON	4 AGENT X44
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 LITTLE CHILDREN		
	3 DÉJÀ VU	4 AGENT X44	5 BABEL	

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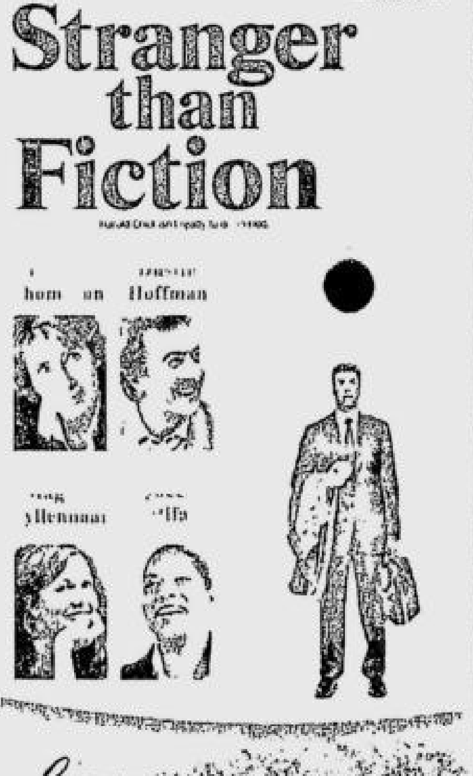

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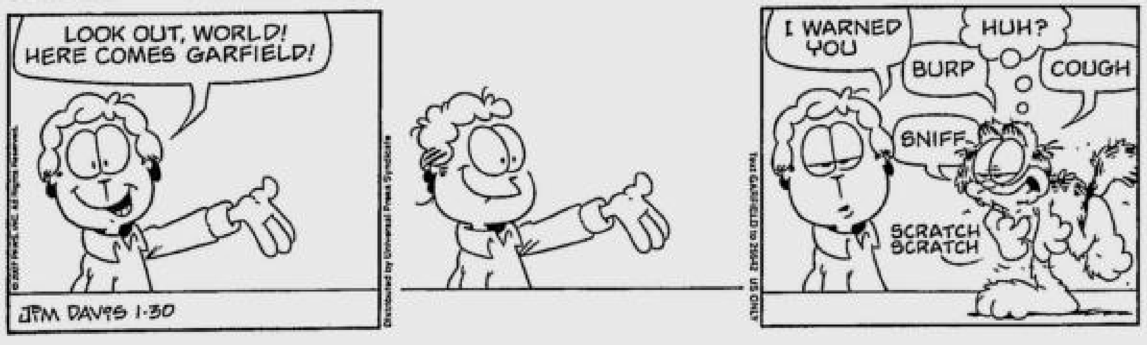
LOOK OUT, WORLD! HERE COMES GARFIELD!
JIM DAVIS 1-30
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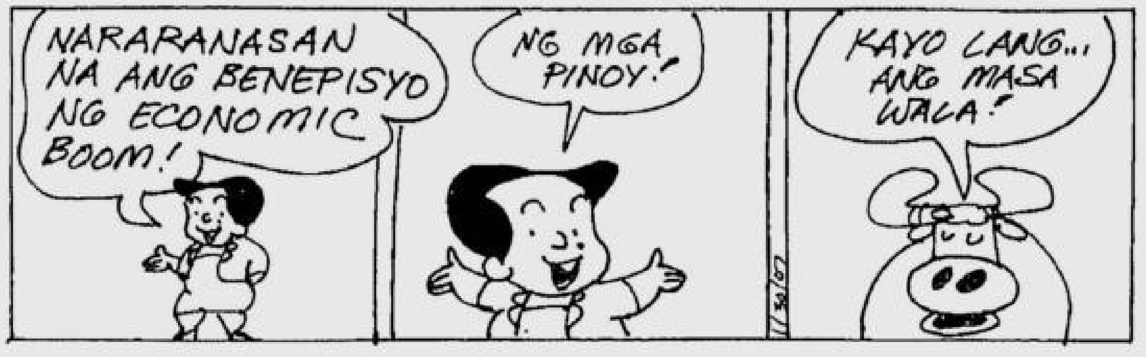
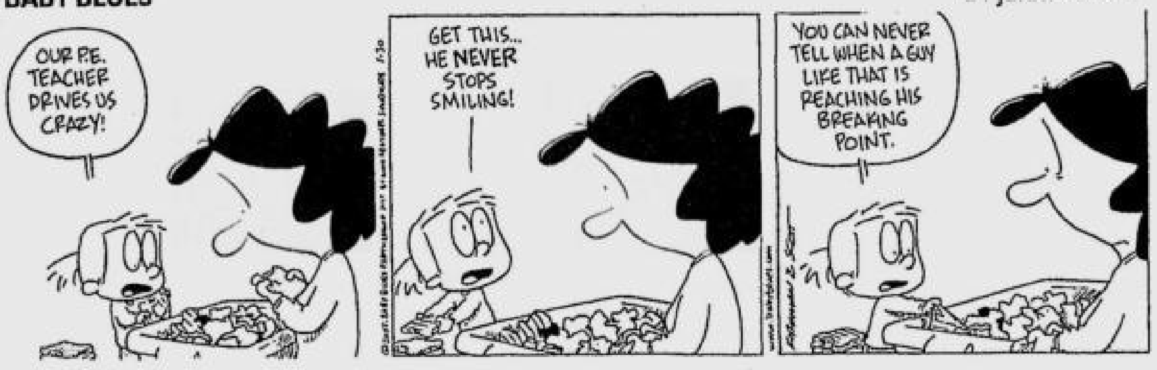
I WARNED YOU
HUH?
BURP
COUGH
SNIFF
SCRATCH SCRATCH

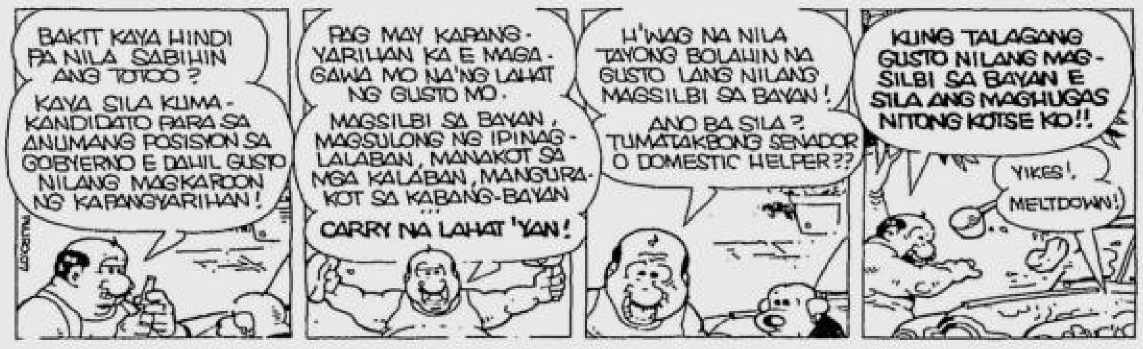
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


NARARANASAN NA ANG BENEPISYO NG ECONOMIC BOOM!
NG MGA PINOY!
1/30/07
KAYO LANG... ANG MASA WALA!

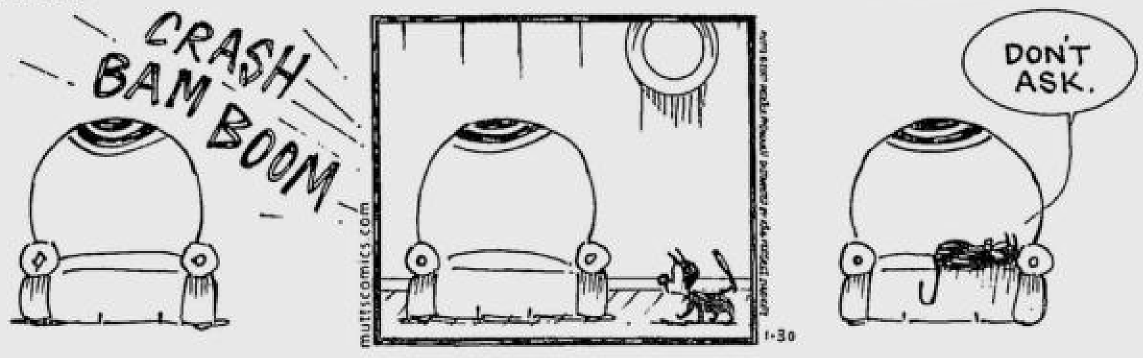
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


OUR P.E. TEACHER DRIVES US CRAZY!
GET THIS... HE NEVER STOPS SMILING!
YOU CAN NEVER TELL WHEN A GUY LIKE THAT IS REACHING HIS BREAKING POINT.

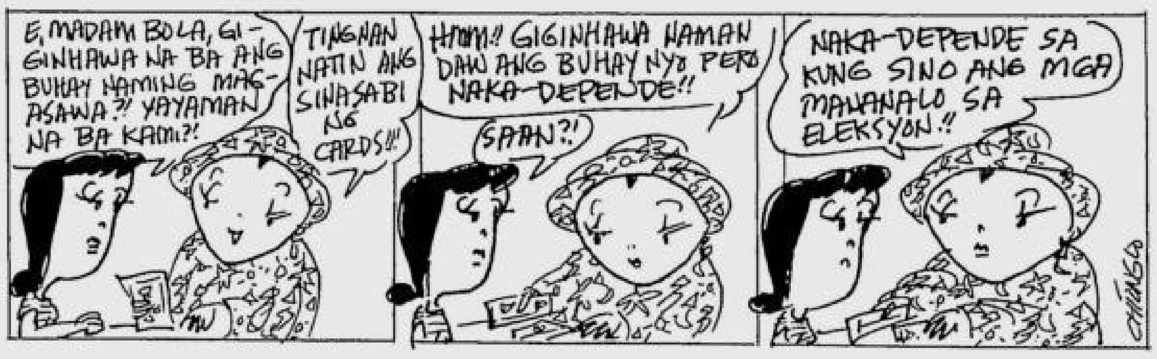
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


BAKIT KAYA HINDI PA NILA SABIHIN ANG TOTOO?
KAYA SILA KUMAKANDIDATO PARA SA ANUMANG POSISYON SA GOBYERNO E DAHIL GUSTO NILANG MAGKAROON NG KAPANGYARIHAN!
PAG MAY KAPANGYARIHAN KA E MAGAGAWA MO NA'NG LAHAT NG GUSTO MO.
MAGSILBI SA BAYAN, MAGSULONG NG IPINAGLALABAN, MANAKOT SA MGA KALABAN, MANGURAKOT SA KABANG-BAYAN...
CARRY NA LAHAT 'YAN!
H'WAG NA NILA TAYONG BOLAHIN NA GUSTO LANG NILANG MAGSILBI SA BAYAN!
ANO BA SILA? TUMATAKBONG SENADOR O DOMESTIC HELPER??
KUNG TALAGANG GUSTO NILANG MAGSILBI SA BAYAN E SILA ANG MAGHUGAS NITONG KOTSE KO!!
YIKES!
MELTDOWN!

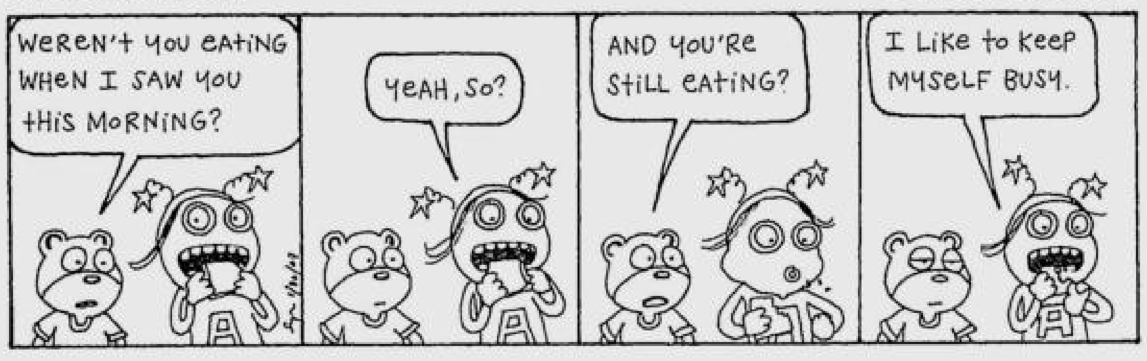
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


CRASH
BAM
BOOM
mutts comics.com
DON'T ASK.
1-30

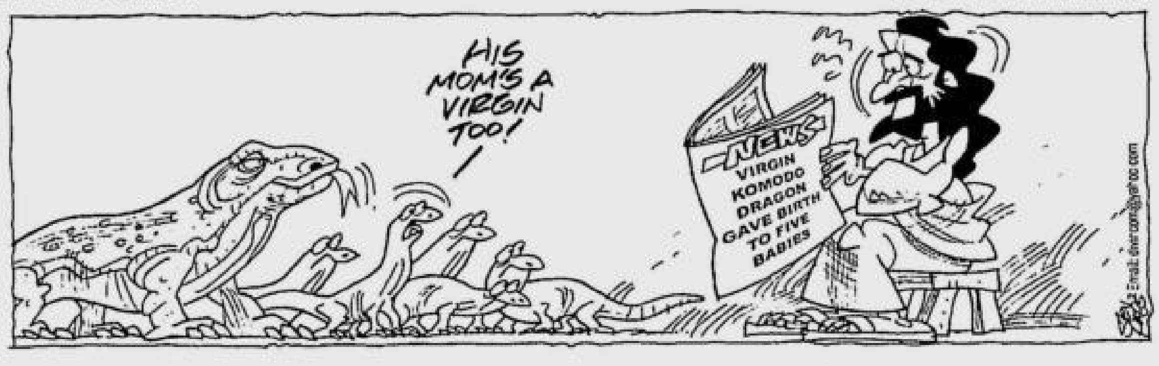
LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


E, MADAM BOLA, GIGINHAWA NA BA ANG BUHAY NAMING MAG-ASAWA?! YAYAMAN NA BA KAMI?!
TINGNAN NATIN ANG SINASABI NG CARDS!!!
HMM!! GIGINHAWA NAMAN DAW ANG BUHAY NYO PERO NAKA-DEPENDE!!
SAAN?!
NAKA-DEPENDE SA KUNG SINO ANG MGA MANANALO SA ELEKSYON!!
CHIONGLO

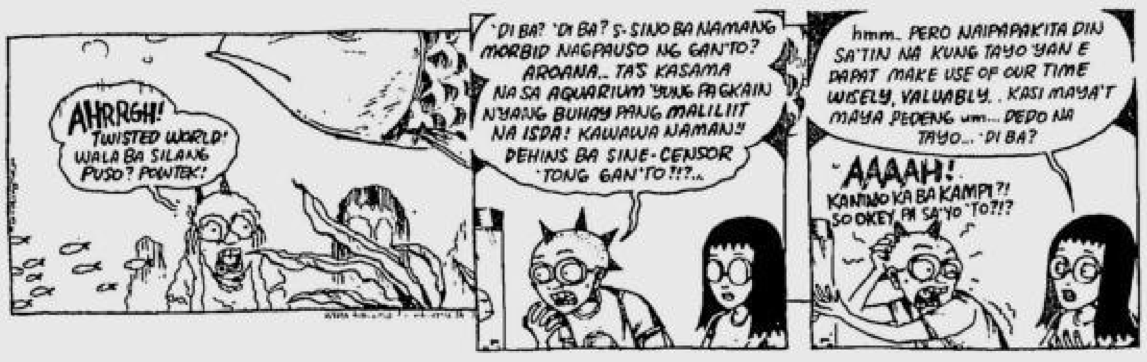
ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WEREN'T YOU EATING WHEN I SAW YOU THIS MORNING?
YEAH, SO?
AND YOU'RE STILL EATING?
I LIKE TO KEEP MYSELF BUSY.

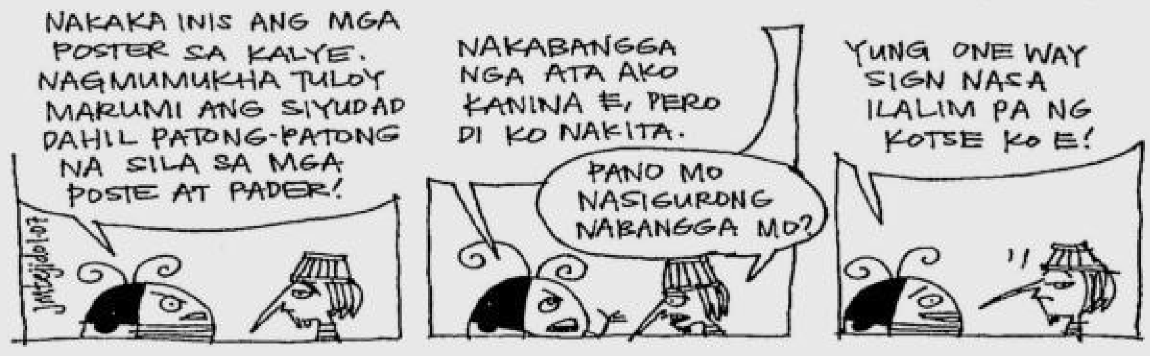
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


HIS MOM'S A VIRGIN TOO!
NEWS
VIRGIN KOMODO DRAGON GAVE BIRTH TO FIVE BABIES

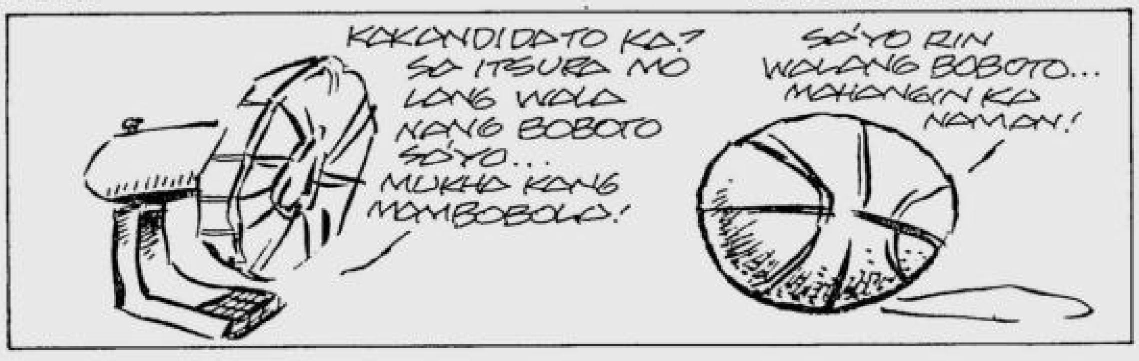
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


AHRRGH! TWISTED WORLD! WALA BA SILANG PUSO? POWTEK!
'DI BA? 'DI BA? S-SINO BA NAMANG MORBID NAGPAUSO NG GAN'TO? AROANA... TA'S KASAMA NA SA AQUARIUM 'YUNG PAGKAIN NYANG BUHAY PANG MALILIIT NA ISDA! KAWAWA NAMAN! DEHINS BA SINE-CENSOR 'TONG GAN'TO?!?..
hmm.. PERO NAIPAPAKITA DIN SA'TIN NA KUNG TAYO 'YAN E DAPAT MAKE USE OF OUR TIME WISELY, VALUABLY.. KASI MAYA'T MAYA PEDENG um... DEDO NA TAYO... 'DI BA?
AAAAH! KANINO KA BA KAMPI?! SO OKEY PA SA'YO 'TO?!?

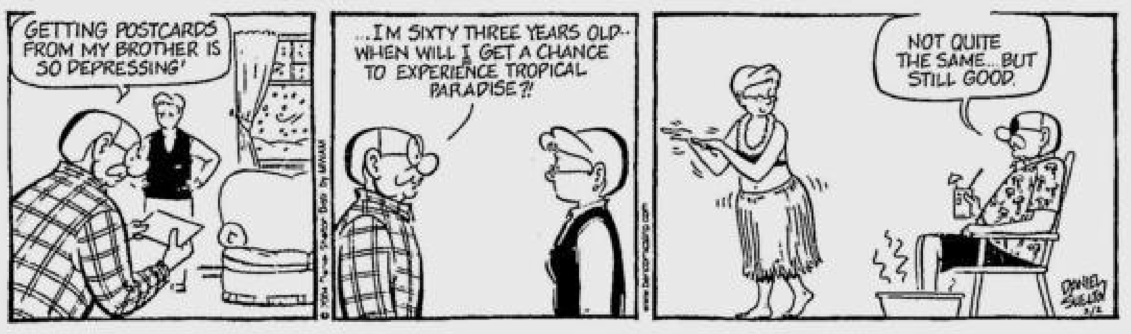
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NAKAKA INIS ANG MGA POSTER SA KALYE. NAGMUMUKHA TULOY MARUMI ANG SIYUDAD DAHIL PATONG-PATONG NA SILA SA MGA POSTE AT PADER!
NAKABANGGA NGA ATA AKO KANINA E, PERO DI KO NAKITA.
PANO MO NASIGURONG NABANGGA MO?
YUNG ONE WAY SIGN NASA ILALIM PA NG KOTSE KO E!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


KAKANDIDATO KA? SA ITSURA MO LONG WALA NANG BOBOTO SA'YO... MUKHA KANG MAMBOBOLA!
SA'YO RIN WALANG BOBOTO... MAHANGIN KA NAMAN!

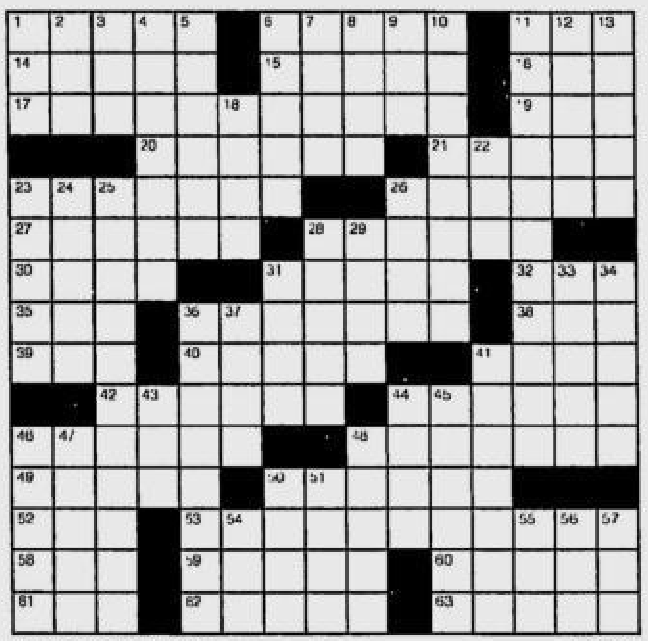
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


GETTING POSTCARDS FROM MY BROTHER IS SO DEPRESSING!
...I'M SIXTY THREE YEARS OLD... WHEN WILL I GET A CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE TROPICAL PARADISE?!
NOT QUITE THE SAME... BUT STILL GOOD.
DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Successful dieter?
6 Goddess of the hearth
11 Gift from Santa
14 Monte __
15 Motionless
16 Poker bullet
17 How tobacco is processed
19 Novelist Kesey
20 Least little bit
21 Vexed continually
23 Valentino movies, e.g.
26 Large tropical lizard
27 Photo copies
28 Pattern
30 Huck Finn's craft
31 Blender
32 Twice: abbr.
35 Graph's end?
36 Wavy-haired dog
38 Wow!
39 Logical start?
40 "Luncheon on the Grass" painter
41 Galileo's birthplace
42 Imperfect
44 Really, really wanted
46 Puts forward
48 Venus and Uranus
49 Gargoyle
50 Grief-stricken
52 Circle segment
53 Intellectual condition?
58 Tangled mass
59 Continental money
60 Term of tenancy
61 Franken and Gore
62 Soon-to-be adults
63 Blow one's top

DOWN
1 Math letters
2 Bladed pole
3 Hindu honorific
4 Constituent
5 Squirrel or rat
6 Creepers
7 Some linemen
8 Religion spin-off
9 Play about Capote
10 Braval Braval
11 Robin Hood's M.O.
12 Arctic or Antarctic
13 Lip-flapping woman
18 Part of B.A.
22 Yank
23 Small branch
24 Seeing red
25 Statistician's existence?
26 That's right
28 Enjoyed a meal
29 Way out
31 Lion's do
33 Attack from all sides
34 Is in front
36 Intellectual elite
37 Manhandles
41 Black leopard
43 Guitarist Paul
44 Singer Laine
45 Fund-raising event
46 Barack of Illinois
47 Wild again
48 News media
50 Unfurnished
51 Bond's alma mater
54 Wk. part
55 Water in the Seine
56 Egyptian viper
57 N.Y.P.D. rank



By Norma Steinberg
San Francisco, CA
1/30/07

Monday's Puzzle Solved

F	L	E	W		P	E	R	E	S		R	B	I	S
R	E	D	O		A	T	A	L	L		E	R	R	S
E	V	E	R		G	U	I	L	E		P	A	A	R
E	I	N	S	T	E	I	N	I	U	M		I	O	S
			T	E	D			S	T	A	I	N		
B	A	G		C	O	M	A		H	U	N	T	E	R
E	V	E	N	S	W	A	P			L	U	R	I	E
L	E	N	A		N	E	A	T	H		S	U	E	S
T	R	I	T	E			R	H	O	D	E	S	I	A
S	T	U	A	R	T		T	O	M	E		T	O	W
		S	L	A	I	N			E	L	F			
J	J	L		S	M	A	R	T	W	E	A	P	O	N
A	T	O	P		I	D	A	H	O		R	E	L	Y
W	A	C	O		N	I	G	E	R		M	E	D	S
S	H	I	P		G	R	E	E	K		S	K	E	E

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1/30/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have high ideals and are often active for a particular social cause. You want to make a difference in the world. You'll succeed in doing this in large measure because you're intelligent and organized. You get things done! You're an excellent communicator. Work hard to build or construct something this year. Your rewards will soon follow.

Birthdate of: Vanessa Redgrave, actress; Wilmer Valerrama, actor; Gene Hackman, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Focus on family members today, especially parents. Confine real estate deals to the earlier part of the day. You might enjoy time alone at home.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might talk to relatives, especially siblings, today. You feel nurturing toward someone, or perhaps someone feels this way toward you.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Financial matters concern you today. If you're making important deals or buying anything expensive, try to do this in the morning or early afternoon.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): The Moon is in your sign today, and this makes you more emotional than usual. However, it can also attract an extra little bit of good luck your way! (This is always good.)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): You'll enjoy time spent alone today. You need some privacy to pull your act together so that you can take it on the road. Don't push the river.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): A female friend might be particularly sympathetic and comforting to you today. (Quite possibly, you will play this role for someone else.) People feel gentle and maternal today.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You will likely do something to get the attention of bosses, parents and VIPs today. Certainly, you are noticed! This is a playful time for you—enjoy yourself.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Try to do something different today. You're hungry for adventure; plus you want to learn something new. Go someplace you've never been before.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a good day to look at red-tape matters connected with insurance, bills, inheritances, taxes and estates. However, don't make any important decisions later in the afternoon.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Because the Moon is opposite your sign today, you'll have to go more than halfway when dealing with partners and close friends. This is no big deal. Keep your bridges open.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You have an urge to take care of little details today, because you want to increase your efficiency and effectiveness in everything you do. Try to do as much as possible as early in the day as possible. (Things go sideways by late afternoon.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your creative vibes are hot today. Enjoy playful times with children or explore the arts. Romance is also favored.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

3				8	7		2	9
7		8						
				6			5	
1			7		5			
5		7				6		4
			2		6			8
	5			9				
						2		1
9	3		8	7				5

Difficulty Level ★★
1/30

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	7	4	8	1	2	3	5	9
5	3	1	7	9	4	8	2	6
8	2	9	5	6	3	1	7	4
1	5	8	6	3	7	4	9	2
2	6	7	9	4	8	5	3	1
9	4	3	2	5	1	6	8	7
4	8	5	1	7	9	2	6	3
7	1	2	3	8	6	9	4	5
3	9	6	4	2	5	7	1	8

Difficulty Level ★
1/29

Golden Globes come into their own

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

FOR DECADES NOW, THE GOLDEN Globe awards have been content to play second fiddle to the Oscars, serving as shy precursors to the much more popular Academy Awards.

Slowly but surely in the new millennium, however, the film section of the Golden Globes has increased in importance and significance. In fact, from the general industry reaction to the recent 2006 Golden Globe awards, we can say that the traditionally "lesser" awards have finally come into their own.

We think this is a good development because, for all of their popularity, the Oscars are sometimes not all that credible, with Academy jurors voting subjectively on occasion.

It's true that, being industry awards, the Oscars carry more weight and clout, because film artists like being cited by their peers, who are supposed to be acutely knowledgeable about what truly constitutes excellence in the individual movie arts and crafts.

On the other hand, the emotional factor sometimes plays too big a part in the deliberations, and this makes the Oscars not as objective as they should be.

A prime example of this is the year in which **Elizabeth Taylor** came up with "awardable" performances in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" and "Suddenly Last Summer," but lost out in the 1958 and 1959 awards.

Then, she fell grievously ill, and the Academy guiltily gave her a "sympathy" Oscar for her rather mediocre portrayal in "Butterfield 8."

For their part, the Golden Globes are handed out by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, so they may be deemed to be "outsider" awards, vis-a-vis the "insider" Oscars.

Through the years, however, the Globes have acquired a reputation for keeping an eye out for small gems that "mainstream"-oriented Hollywood-based film practitioners sometimes overlook. The Globes have also tended to be more "international" in outlook.

Instructively, the Academy Awards have been changing in outlook and orientation this past decade—in favor of these two totems of the Golden Globes. Oscars are now awarded to smaller films, and to works and performances from different countries.

In fact, more people now look to the Globes for early signs of how the Oscars could turn out. So topical have the Globes become that the Oscars' awards rites have been scheduled earlier in the year, so as not to feel too anticlimactic when compared to the Golden Globes.

'The Promise'

THE ORIGINAL soundtrack album of the new film, "The Promise," is now available in record outlets, while the GMA Films and Regal Films production will be shown starting Feb. 14, Valentine's Day. The album features "Promise (I'll Never Say Goodbye)," the movie's theme song, sung as a love duet by **Regine Velasquez** and **Ogie Alcasid**. The recording has been getting extensive airplay on radio stations like 90.7 Love Radio, Energy FM 91.5, I-FM 93.9, Home Radio 97.9, YES FM 101.1, WRR 101.9 For Life and Star FM 102.7.

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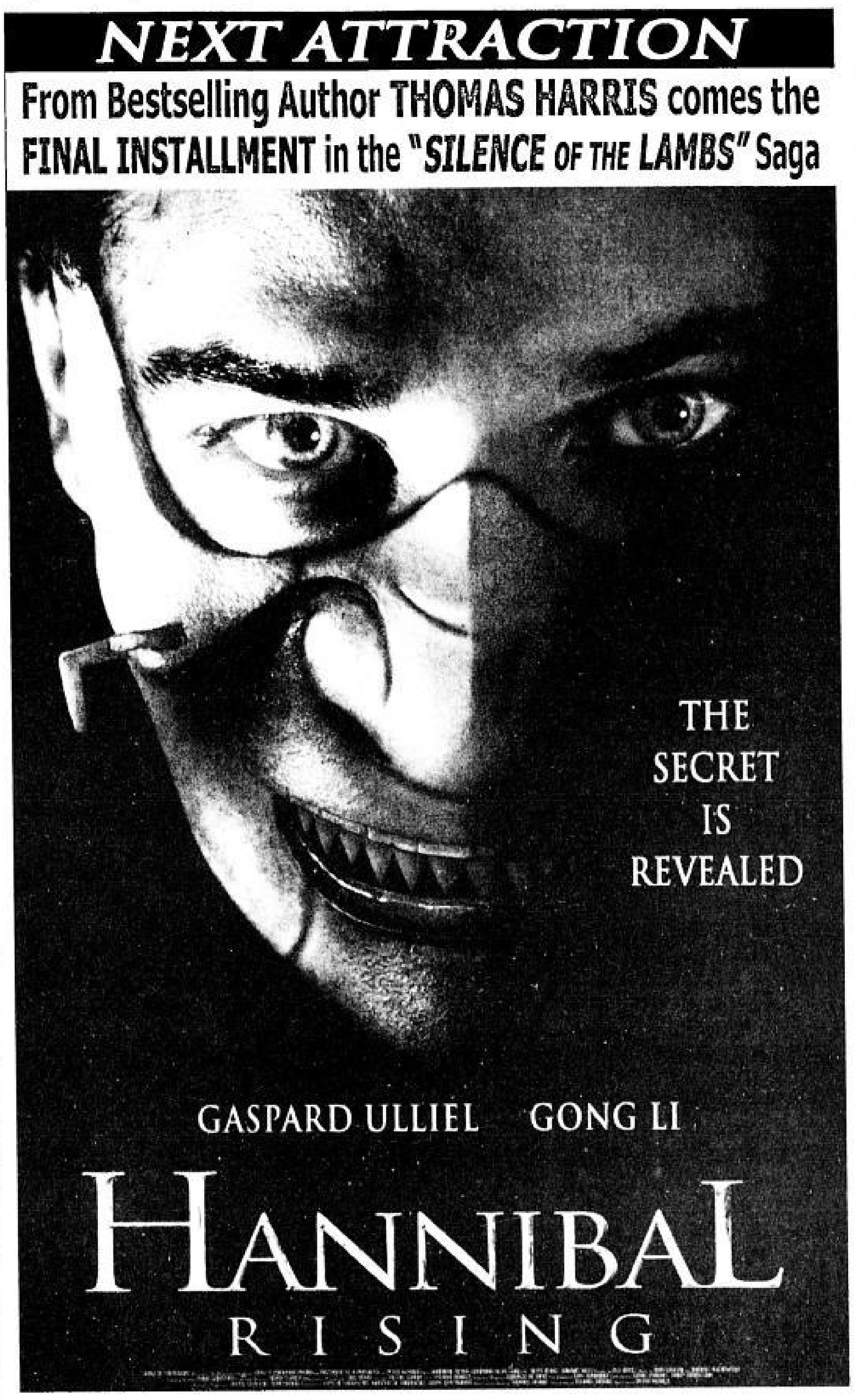
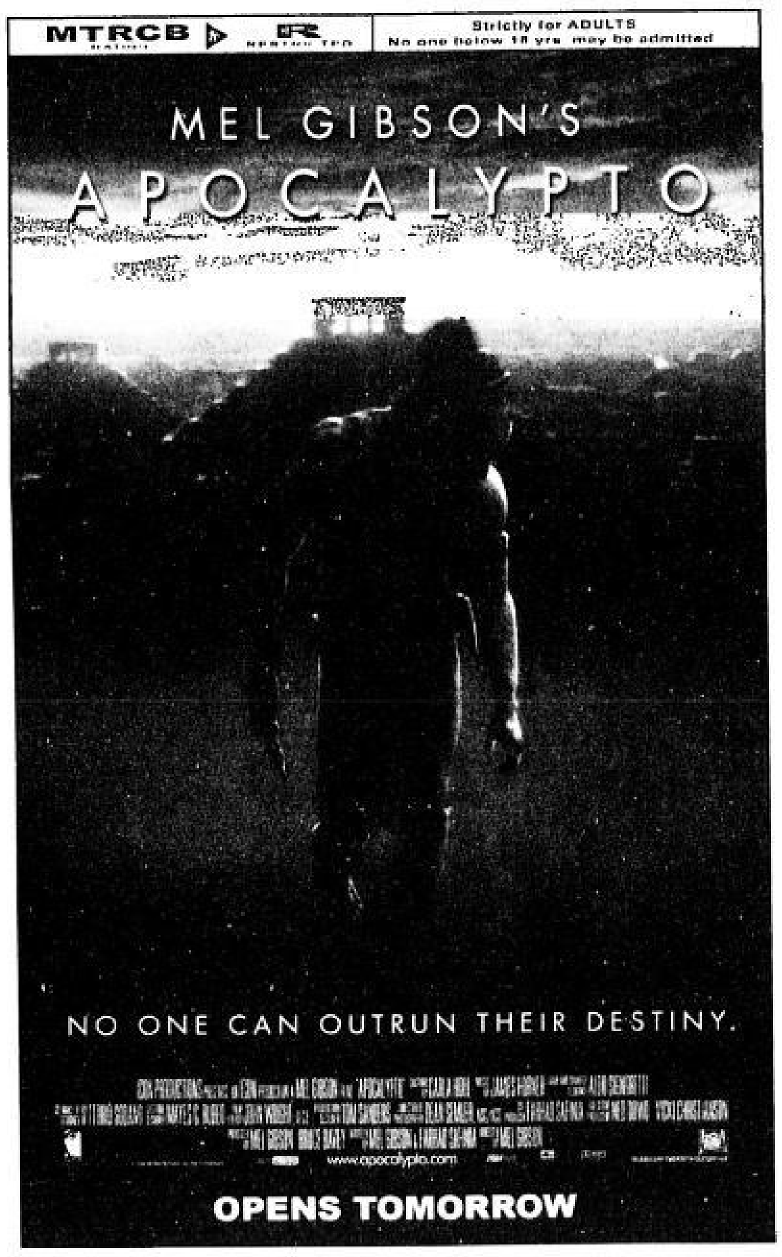

NEXT ATTRACTION
From Bestselling Author THOMAS HARRIS comes the FINAL INSTALLMENT in the "SILENCE OF THE LAMBS" Saga
THE SECRET IS REVEALED
GASPARD ULLIEL
GONG LI
HANNIBAL RISING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Strictly for ADULTS
No one below 18 yrs. may be admitted
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APOCALYPTO
NO ONE CAN OUTRUN THEIR DESTINY.
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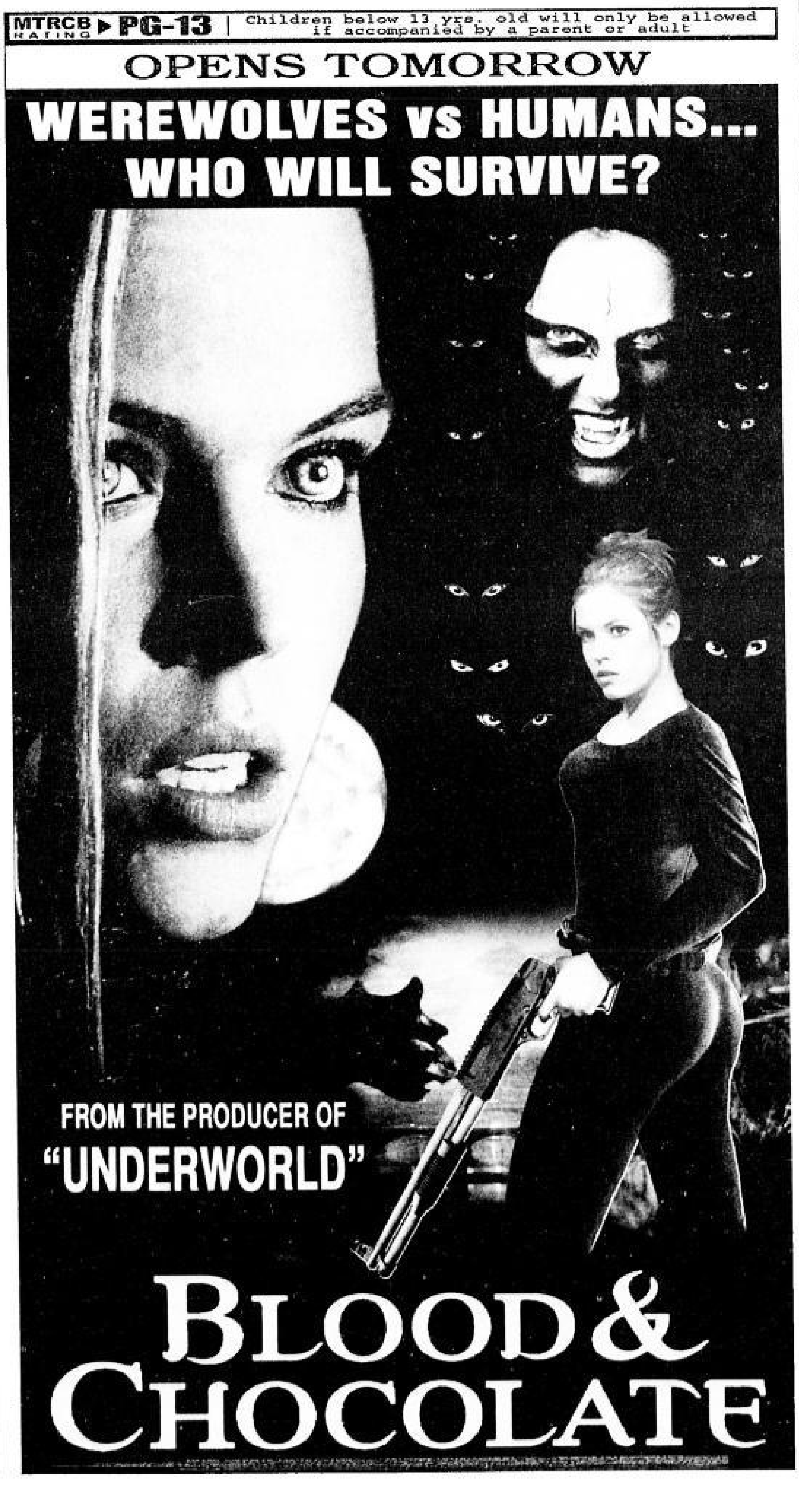
OPENS TOMORROW


MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
OPENS TOMORROW
WEREWOLVES vs HUMANS... WHO WILL SURVIVE?
FROM THE PRODUCER OF "UNDERWORLD"
BLOOD & CHOCOLATE

Roberts Fanning Buscemi Cleese Winfrey
The Entertainer Bates McEntire Redford Church Benjamin
MTRCB RATING ▶ G FOR GENERAL AUDIENCE
Charlotte's Web
Help Is Coming From Above
Release through Solar Entertainment Corporation
IN THEATERS TOMORROW

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION
MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
1 LITTLE CHILDREN
2 BABEL
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 DÉJÀ VU
PREMIERE
NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DÉJÀ VU
3 AGENT X 44
4 LITTLE CHILDREN

starmall EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 AGENT X 44
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
5 RESRVED

metropolis star cinema
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433934
1 AGENT X 44
2 LITTLE CHILDREN
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

THEATRES
1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 AGENT X 44
3 DÉJÀ VU

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
1 AGENT X 44
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 RESRVED
4 RESRVED

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 SAW - 3 / ROB-B-HOOD
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 ERAGON
4 DÉJÀ VU
5 BABEL
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 LITTLE CHILDREN
9 KASAL KASALI KASALO
10 AGENT X 44

Blue Wave MARIKINA
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 (DOLBY) AGENT X 44
3 (DOLBY) ROB-B-HOOD
4 (DOLBY) RESERVED

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 LITTLE CHILDREN
3 AGENT X 44
4 KAMASUTRA-3
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 AGENT X 44
2 SHAOLIN EVIL DEAD -3
3 PLAESE CALL
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 AGENT X 44
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 BLOOD DIAMOND

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DÉJÀ VU

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 KAMASUTRA-3
4 A GOOD YEAR

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 AGENT X 44
2 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 DÉJÀ VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 LITTLE CHILDREN

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 SAW - 3
2 AGENT X 44
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 DÉJÀ VU
2 AGENT X 44
3 ERAGON

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 AGENT X 44
3 DÉJÀ VU
4 ROB-B-HOOD

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 AGENT X 44
3 DÉJÀ VU

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan) tel. (044) 4867736
1 AGENT X 44
2 ERAGON

Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO
2 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.3276
1 SPIRIT TRAP
2 BAYARAN
3 BASA SA DAGAT
4 ERAGON

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 SAW - 3
2 ROOM SERVICE
3 AGENT X 44
4 GAMITAN
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 ZU WARRIOR
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 AGENT X 44
4 SAW - 3

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD
2 KAMASUTRA - 3

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

CHOOSE YOUR Valentine SHOW

IT'S THAT TIME OF the year. And so, once again, we are helping you pick the best show for that special date, by asking the concert artists who are going onstage what they have in store for audiences.

ERIK Santos and Kuh Ledesma

Kuh Ledesma

"Love Is ...," with guests Erik Santos and Rey Valera, Feb. 13 & 14, Captain's Bar, Mandarin Oriental Hotel

When you're not doing a concert, how do you celebrate Valentine's Day?

I am blessed to always have shows on Valentine's Day.

What's the most romantic Valentine's Day you've ever experienced?

I don't think I've ever had one with a date, but I have experienced romantic Valentines in some of the shows I've done ... because of the songs.

What's an ideal Valentine date?

Someone who is a lot of fun and funny, but super good-looking and smart at the same time. Someone who loves life and music.

Who's your fantasy date?

Robert De Niro because he is someone I admire. He's totally my type!

What's the most romantic love song?

"What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" Also, "From This Moment," a commitment song popular in weddings. In fact, I have sung it in two weddings.

If you were not doing a show, who would you watch?

I would love to watch a Seal concert.

Why should we watch your show?

The songs are very well-chosen. My repertoire is very romantic. My guests are wonderful singers. The duets are fabulous. My gowns are amazing. The venue is very intimate and cozy and, as bonus, the tickets are affordable. *Bayani San Diego Jr.*

Golden Sunset

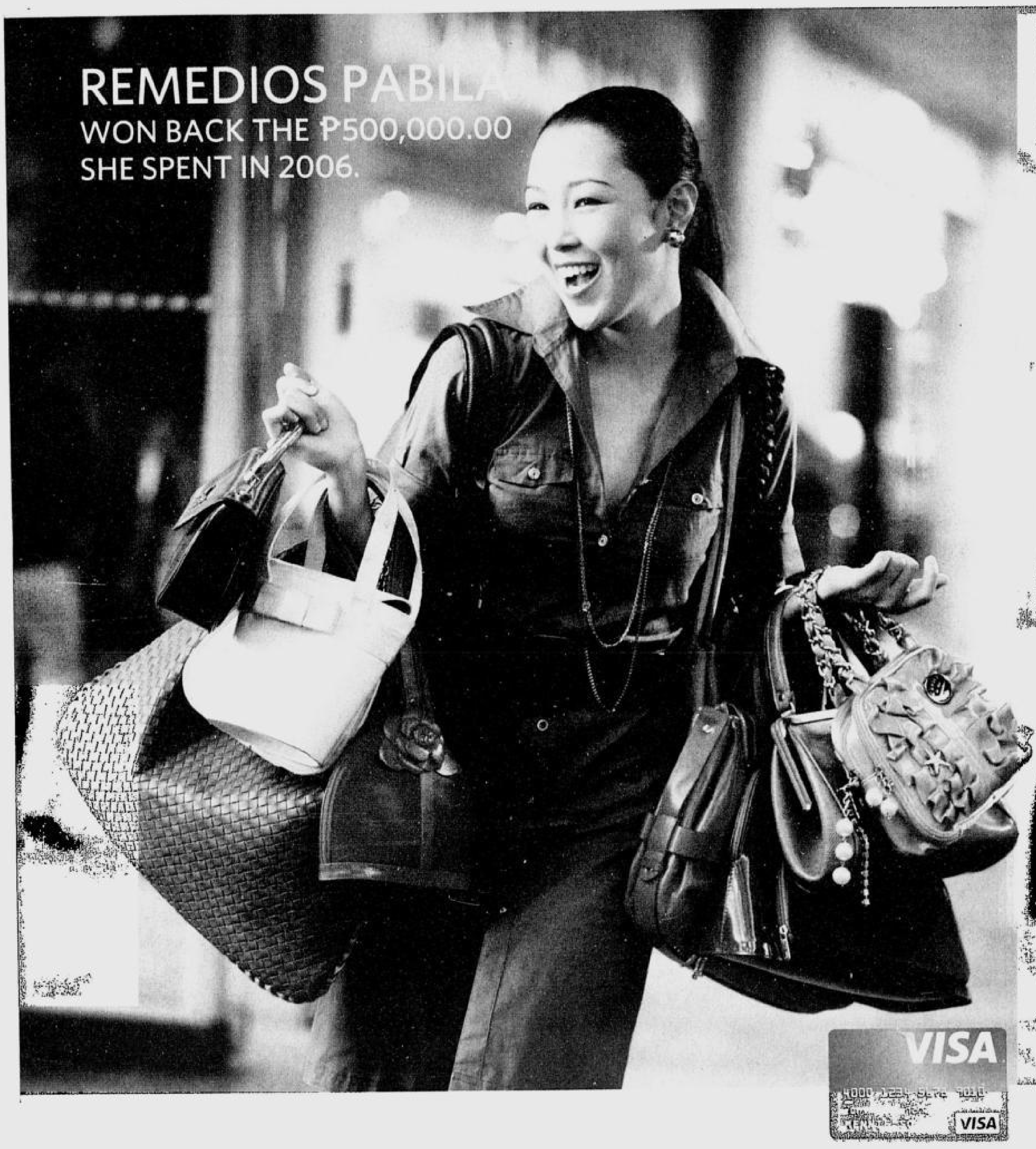
Two-hours from Manila, in Calatagan, Batangas, is the Golden Sunset Resort, fast becoming known for weekend cultural shows.

Terpsichore One, the resort's official dance troupe, presents the country's rich heritage through colorful song and dance numbers. Plus, a highlight of the show, the Hawaiian-Polynesian Fire Dance.

"The performances are definitely world-class," says Ricky Reyes, owner-proprietor.

TERPSICHORE ONE

VISA'S GREAT REBATE WINNER!



Congratulations to her for being the fifth winner of Visa's Great Rebate!

Open to all Philippine-issued Visa Debit, Prepaid, Credit and Visa Electron cardholders.
A minimum ₱500 single-receipt Visa purchase allows cardholders to register.
Registration may be done through SMS. Text the following details to 2361 for Globe and 325 for Smart:
a. Full name (as it appears on the card)
b. First 6 digits of the account number
c. Last 4 digits of the account number
d. Amount of transaction
e. Date of transaction
f. Time of transaction (24-hour format)
Ex. VISA Mennie So,400000,1234,1000.25,111206,1808
Visa transactions may also be registered through the Promo website. (www.hblmasia.com/visa)
Draws will be conducted bi-weekly starting November 21, 2006 (total of 6 winners).
Promo period: November 12, 2006 - January 30, 2007

VISA
All it takes.

Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 4136. Series of 2006. See posters for details.

Visa and Tiger Airways offer exclusive 40% discount

Book on Tiger Airways using a Visa card and enjoy double discounts on travel to and from Singapore

Manila, Philippines, 26 January 2007

Visa and Tiger Airways, Singapore's low fare airline, jointly launched great travel offers for Visa cardholders to enjoy low fare travel in 2007.

Tiger Airways is offering 20% discounts on fares for bookings from 29 January to 4 February 2007 for travel to and from Singapore in March 2007. This means Visa card holders will enjoy twice the discount on bookings with 40% off Tiger Airways fares.

Routes on double discount offers include Manila (Clark) to Singapore and other destinations:
Singapore - Manila (Clark)
Singapore - Bangkok
Singapore - Chiang Mai
Singapore - Darwin
Singapore - Hat Yai
Singapore - Hanoi
Singapore - Ho Chi Minh City
Singapore - Phuket
Singapore - Krabi
Singapore - Udon Thani

"Visa is proud to partner with Tiger Airways on this promotion. The exclusive discount gives added value for Visa cardholders," said Visa International Country Manager for the Philippines Bob Joubert. "It has always been Visa's goal to make the payment process as rewarding, secure and convenient as possible. With this promotion we hope that we can make travel to Singapore and other destinations even easier and more affordable for Visa cardholders."

"We want to make Tiger Airways synonymous with great value and we are excited at being able to offer these great discounts so that our customers can enjoy our fantastic low fares. This is the start of a brand new year and we are delighted to bring even more value to our partners at Visa. For this week, Visa cardholders will enjoy an exclusive double discount on their bookings for travel in March 2007," said Tiger Airways Chief Marketing and Commercial Officer Rosalynn Tay.

"Today's travelers are always on the lookout for good reliable, affordable air services. We are proud to have been the choice of more than two million passengers in just two short years of operations. This shows our strategy of offering consistent, sustainable low cost fares for travel across the Asia-Pacific region is well received by the travel market. We invite all Visa cardholders to visit our website www.tigerairways.com and make a booking to enjoy the exclusive offers now!"

ADVT